



















THE  
WORKS  
OF  
WILLIAM PALEY, D.D.  
AND AN ACCOUNT OF THE  
LIFE AND WRITINGS OF THE AUTHOR,  
BY THE REV. EDMUND PALEY, A.M.

VICAR OF EASINGWOLD.

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WITH A PORTRAIT.

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## CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

---

### EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

	Page
Preparatory Considerations.—Of the antecedent Credibility of Miracles.	1

### PART I.

OF THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, AND WHEREIN  
IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE EVIDENCE ALLEGED FOR OTHER  
MIRACLES.

---

Proposition stated . . . . .	7,
------------------------------	----

### PROPOSITION I.

That there is satisfactory Evidence, that many, professing to be original  
Witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their Lives in Labours,  
Dangers, and Sufferings, voluntarily undergone in Attestation of the  
Accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their  
Belief of those Accounts; and that they also submitted, from the  
same Motives, to new Rules of Conduct . . . . . ib.

### CHAPTER I.

Evidence of the Sufferings of the first Propagators of Christianity, from the Nature of the Case . . . . .	ib.
---	-----

### CHAPTER II.

Evidence of the Sufferings of the first Propagators of Christianity, from profane Testimony . . . . .	16
--	----

## CHAPTER III.

	Page
Indirect Evidence of the Sufferings of the first Propagators of Christianity, from the Scriptures and other ancient Christian Writings . . . . .	21

## CHAPTER IV.

Direct Evidence of the same . . . . .	25
---------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER V.

Observations upon the preceding Evidence . . . . .	37
--	----

## CHAPTER VI.

That the Story, for which the first Propagators of Christianity suffered, was miraculous . . . . .	41
--	----

## CHAPTER VII.

That it was, in the main, the Story which we have now, proved by indirect Considerations . . . . .	44
--	----

## CHAPTER VIII.

The same proved from the Authority of our historical Scriptures . . . . .	55
---	----

## CHAPTER IX.

Of the Authenticity of the historical Scriptures, in eleven Sections . . . . .	65
SECT. I. Quotations of the historical Scriptures by ancient Christian Writers . . . . .	71
SECT. II. Of the peculiar Respect with which they were quoted . . . . .	90
SECT. III. The Scriptures were in very early Times collected into a distinct Volume . . . . .	93
SECT. IV. And distinguished by appropriate Names and Titles of Respect . . . . .	96
SECT. V. Were publicly read and expounded in the religious Assemblies of the early Christians . . . . .	98
SECT. VI. Commentaries, &c., were anciently written upon the Scriptures . . . . .	100
SECT. VII. They were received by ancient Christians of different Sects and Persuasions . . . . .	104
SECT. VIII. The four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of Saint Paul, the first Epistle of John, and the first of Peter, were received without doubt by those who doubted concerning the other Books of our present Canon . . . . .	109



	Page
SECT. IX. Our present Gospels were considered by the Adversaries of Christianity as containing the Accounts upon which the Religion was founded. . . . .	112
SECT. X. Formal Catalogues of authentic Scriptures were published, in all which our present Gospels were included . . . . .	117
SECT. XI. The above Propositions cannot be predicated of those Books which are commonly called Apocryphal Books of the New Testament . . . . .	119

## CHAPTER X.

Recapitulation . . . . .	123
--------------------------	-----

OF THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, AND WHEREIN  
IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE EVIDENCE ALLEGED FOR OTHER  
MIRACLES.

## PROPOSITION II.

## CHAPTER I.

That there is NOT satisfactory Evidence, that Persons pretending to be original Witnesses of any other similar Miracles, have acted in the same Manner, in Attestation of the Accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their Belief of the Truth of those Accounts . . . . .	126
---	-----

## CHAPTER II.

Consideration of some specific Instances . . . . .	142
--	-----

## PART II.

OF THE AUXILIARY EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

## CHAPTER I.

Prophecy . . . . .	148
--------------------	-----

## CHAPTER II.

The Morality of the Gospel . . . . .	156
--------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER III.

	Page
The Candour of the Writers of the New Testament . . . .	180

## CHAPTER IV.

Identity of Christ's Character . . . . .	188
--	-----

## CHAPTER V.

Originality of our Saviour's Character . . . . .	197
--	-----

## CHAPTER VI.

Conformity of the Facts occasionally mentioned or referred to in Scripture, with the State of Things in those Times, as represented by foreign and independent Accounts . . . . .	198
---	-----

## CHAPTER VII.

Undesigned Coincidences . . . . .	222
-----------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VIII.

Of the History of the Resurrection . . . . .	224
--	-----

## CHAPTER IX.

Of the Propagation of Christianity . . . . .	227
SECT. II. Reflections upon the preceding Account . . . . .	242
SECT. III. Of the Religion of Mahomet . . . . .	247

## PART III.

## A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME POPULAR OBJECTIONS.

## CHAPTER I.

The Discrepancies between the several Gospels . . . . .	258
---	-----

## CHAPTER II.

Erroneous Opinions imputed to the Apostles . . . . .	261
--	-----

## CHAPTER III.

	Page
The Connexion of Christianity with the Jewish History . . . . .	264

## CHAPTER IV.

Rejection of Christianity . . . . .	266
-------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER V.

That the Christian Miracles are not recited, or appealed to, by early Christian Writers themselves, so fully or frequently as might have been expected . . . . .	278
--	-----

## CHAPTER VI.

Want of Universality in the Knowledge and Reception of Christianity, and of greater Clearness in the Evidence . . . . .	285
--	-----

## CHAPTER VII.

The supposed Effects of Christianity . . . . .	291
--	-----

## CHAPTER VIII.

The Conclusion . . . . .	297
--------------------------	-----

---

 HORÆ PAULINÆ.

## CHAPTER I.

Exposition of the Argument . . . . .	313
--------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER II.

The Epistle to the Romans . . . . .	320
-------------------------------------	-----



## CHAPTER III.

The First Epistle to the Corinthians . . . . .	Page 340
--	-------------

## CHAPTER IV.

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians . . . . .	354
---	-----

## CHAPTER V.

The Epistle to the Galatians . . . . .	377
--	-----

## CHAPTER VI.

The Epistle to the Ephesians . . . . .	400
--	-----

## CHAPTER VII.

The Epistle to the Philippians . . . . .	420
--	-----

## CHAPTER VIII.

The Epistle to the Colossians . . . . .	429
---	-----

## CHAPTER IX.

The First Epistle to the Thessalonians . . . . .	435
--	-----

## CHAPTER X.

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians . . . . .	443
---	-----

## CHAPTER XI.

The First Epistle to Timothy . . . . .	447
--	-----

## CHAPTER XII.

The Second Epistle to Timothy . . . . .	454
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIII.

The Epistle to Titus . . . . .	462
--------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XIV.

The Epistle to Philemon . . . . .	466
-----------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XV.

	Page
The Subscriptions of the Epistles . . . . .	471

## CHAPTER XVI.

The Conclusion . . . . .	474
--------------------------	-----

---

A Defence of the Considerations on the Propriety of requiring a Subscription to Articles of Faith ; in reply to a late Answer from the Clarendon Press . . . . .	493
Reasons for Contentment, addressed to the labouring Part of the British Public . . . . .	515



EVIDENCES  
OF  
CHRISTIANITY.





TO

THE HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND

JAMES YORK, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF ELY.

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MY LORD,

WHEN, five years ago, an important station in the University of Cambridge awaited your Lordship's disposal, you were pleased to offer it to me. The circumstances under which this offer was made, demand a public acknowledgement. I had never seen your Lordship; I possessed no connexion which could possibly recommend me to your favour; I was known to you only by my endeavours, in common with many others, to discharge my duty as a tutor in the University; and by some very imperfect, but certainly well-intended, and, as you thought, useful publications since. In an age by no means wanting in examples of honourable patronage, although this deserve not to be mentioned in respect of the object of your Lordship's choice, it is inferior to none in the purity and disinterestedness of the motives which suggested it.

How the following work may be received, I pretend not to foretell. My first prayer concerning it is, that it may do good to any: my second hope, that it may assist, what it hath always been my earnest wish to promote, the religious part of an academical education. If in this latter view it might seem, in any degree, to excuse your Lordship's judgement of its author, I shall be gratified by the reflection, that, to a kindness flowing from public principles, I have made the best public return in my power.

In the mean time, and in every event, I rejoice in the opportunity here afforded me, of testifying the sense I entertain of your Lordship's conduct, and of a notice which I regard as the most flattering distinction of my life.

I am, MY LORD,  
With sentiments of gratitude and respect,  
Your Lordship's faithful  
And most obliged servant,  
WILLIAM PALEY.

# EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

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## PREPARATORY CONSIDERATIONS.

I DEEM it unnecessary to prove that mankind stood in need of a revelation, because I have met with no serious person who thinks that, even under the Christian revelation, we have too much light, or any degree of assurance which is superfluous. I desire moreover, that in judging of Christianity, it may be remembered, that the question lies between this religion and none: for, if the Christian religion be not credible, no one, with whom we have to do, will support the pretensions of any other.

Suppose, then, the world we live in to have had a Creator; suppose it to appear, from the predominant aim and tendency of the provisions and contrivances observable in the universe, that the Deity, when he formed it, consulted for the happiness of his sensitive creation; suppose the disposition which dictated this counsel to continue; suppose a part of the creation to have received faculties from their Maker, by which they are capable of rendering a moral obedience to his will, and of voluntarily pursuing any end for which he has designed them; suppose the Creator to intend for these, his rational and accountable agents, a second state of existence, in which their situation will be regulated by their behaviour in the first state, by which supposition (and by no other) the objection to the divine government in not putting a difference between the good and the bad, and the inconsistency of this confusion with the care and benevolence discoverable in the works of the Deity is done away; suppose it to be of the utmost importance to the subjects of this dispensation to know what is intended for them, that is, suppose the knowledge of it to be highly conducive to the happiness of the species, a purpose which so many provisions of nature are calculated to promote: Suppose, nevertheless, almost the whole race, either by the imperfection of their faculties, the misfortune



of their situation, or by the loss of some prior revelation, to want this knowledge, and not to be likely, without the aid of a new revelation, to attain it: Under these circumstances, is it improbable that a revelation should be made? is it incredible that God should interpose for such a purpose? Suppose him to design for mankind a future state; is it unlikely that he should acquaint him with it?

Now in what way can a revelation be made, but by miracles? In none which we are able to conceive. Consequently, in whatever degree it is probable, or not very improbable, that a revelation should be communicated to mankind at all; in the same degree is it probable, or not very improbable, that miracles should be wrought. Therefore, when miracles are related to have been wrought in the promulgating of a revelation manifestly wanted, and, if true, of inestimable value, the improbability which arises from the miraculous nature of the things related is not greater than the original improbability that such a revelation should be imparted by God.

I wish it, however, to be correctly understood, in what manner, and to what extent, this argument is alleged. We do not assume the attributes of the Deity, or the existence of a future state, in order to *prove* the reality of miracles. That reality always must be proved by evidence. We assert only, that in miracles adduced in support of revelation there is not any such antecedent improbability as no testimony can surmount. And for the purpose of maintaining this assertion, we contend, that the incredibility of miracles related to have been wrought in attestation of a message from God, conveying intelligence of a future state of rewards and punishments, and teaching mankind how to prepare themselves for that state, is not in itself greater than the event, call it either probable or improbable, of the two following propositions being true: namely, first, that a future state of existence should be destined by God for his human creation; and, secondly, that, being so destined, he should acquaint them with it. It is not necessary for our purpose, that these propositions be capable of proof, or even that, by arguments drawn from the light of nature, they can be made out to be probable; it is enough that we are able to say concerning them, that they are not so violently improbable, so contradictory to what we already believe of the divine power and character, that either the propositions themselves, or facts strictly connected with the propositions, (and therefore no further impro-

bable than they are improbable,) ought to be rejected at first sight, and to be rejected by whatever strength or complication of evidence they be attested.

This is the prejudication we would resist. For to this length does a modern objection to miracles go, viz. that no human testimony can in any case render them credible. I think the reflection above stated, that, if there be a revelation, there must be miracles, and that, under the circumstances in which the human species are placed, a revelation is not improbable, or not improbable in any great degree, to be a fair answer to the whole objection.

But since it is an objection which stands in the very threshold of our argument, and, if admitted, is a bar to every proof, and to all future reasoning upon the subject, it may be necessary, before we proceed further, to examine the principle upon which it professes to be founded; which principle is concisely this, That it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false.

Now there appears a small ambiguity in the term "experience," and in the phrases, "contrary to experience," or "contradicting experience," which it may be necessary to remove in the first place. Strictly speaking, the narrative of a fact is *then* only contrary to experience, when the fact is related to have existed at a time and place, at which time and place we being present did not perceive it to exist; as if it should be asserted, that in a particular room, and at a particular hour of a certain day, a man was raised from the dead, in which room, and at the time specified, we, being present and looking on, perceived no such event to have taken place. Here the assertion is contrary to experience properly so called: and this is a contrariety which no evidence can surmount. It matters nothing, whether the fact be of a miraculous nature, or not. But although this be the experience, and the contrariety, which archbishop Tillotson alleged in the quotation with which Mr. Hume opens his Essay, it is certainly not that experience, nor that contrariety, which Mr. Hume himself intended to object. And short of this, I know no intelligible signification which can be affixed to the term "contrary to experience," but one, viz. that of not having ourselves experienced any thing similar to the thing related, or such things not being generally experienced by others. I say "not generally:" for to state concerning the fact in question,

that no such thing was *ever* experienced, or that *universal* experience is against it, is to assume the subject of the controversy.

Now the improbability which arises from the want (for this properly is a want, not a contradiction) of experience, is only equal to the probability there is, that, if the thing were true, we should experience things similar to it, or that such things would be generally experienced. Suppose it then to be true that miracles were wrought on the first promulgation of Christianity, when nothing but miracles could decide its authority, is it certain that such miracles would be repeated so often, and in so many places, as to become objects of general experience? Is it a probability approaching to certainty? is it a probability of any great strength or force? is it such as no evidence can encounter? And yet this probability is the exact *converse*, and therefore the exact measure, of the improbability which arises from the want of experience, and which Mr. Hume represents as invincible by human testimony.

It is not like alleging a new law of nature, or a new experiment in natural philosophy; because, when these are related, it is expected that, under the same circumstances, the same effect will follow universally; and in proportion as this expectation is justly entertained, the want of a corresponding experience negatives the history. But to expect concerning a miracle, that it should succeed upon a repetition, is to expect that which would make it cease to be a miracle, which is contrary to its nature as such, and would totally destroy the use and purpose for which it was wrought.

The force of experience as an objection to miracles is founded in the presumption, either that the course of nature is invariable, or that, if it be ever varied, variations will be frequent and general. Has the necessity of this alternative been demonstrated? Permit us to call the course of nature the agency of an intelligent Being; and is there any good reason for judging this state of the case to be probable? Ought we not rather to expect that such a Being, on occasions of peculiar importance, may interrupt the order which he had appointed, yet, that such occasions should return seldom; that these interruptions consequently should be confined to the experience of a few; that the want of it, therefore, in many, should be matter neither of surprise nor objection?

But as a continuation of the argument from experience, it is



said that, when we advance accounts of miracles, we assign effects without causes, or we attribute effects to causes inadequate to the purpose, or to causes, of the operation of which we have no experience. Of what causes, we may ask, and of what effects does the objection speak? If it be answered that, when we ascribe the cure of the palsy to a touch, of blindness to the anointing of the eyes with clay, or the raising of the dead to a word, we lay ourselves open to this imputation; we reply, that we ascribe no such effects to such causes. We perceive no virtue or energy in these things more than in other things of the same kind. They are merely signs to connect the miracle with its end. The effect we ascribe simply to the volition of the Deity; of whose existence and power, not to say of whose presence and agency, we have previous and independent proof. We have, therefore, all we seek for in the works of rational agents,—a sufficient power and an adequate motive. In a word, once believe that there is a God, and miracles are not incredible.

Mr. Hume states the case of miracles to be a contest of opposite improbabilities, that is to say, a question whether it be more improbable that the miracle should be true, or the testimony false: and this I think a fair account of the controversy. But herein I remark a want of argumentative justice, that, in describing the improbability of miracles, he suppresses all those circumstances of extenuation, which result from our knowledge of the existence, power, and disposition of the Deity; his concern in the creation, the end answered by the miracle, the importance of that end, and its subserviency to the plan pursued in the work of nature. As Mr. Hume has represented the question, miracles are alike incredible to him who is previously assured of the constant agency of a Divine Being, and to him who believes that no such Being exists in the universe. They are equally incredible, whether related to have been wrought upon occasions the most deserving, and for purposes the most beneficial, or for no assignable end whatever, or for an end confessedly trifling or pernicious. This surely cannot be a correct statement. In adjusting also the other side of the balance, the strength and weight of testimony, this author has provided an answer to every possible accumulation of historical proof by telling us, that we are not obliged to explain how the story of the evidence arose. Now I think that we *are* obliged; not, perhaps, to show by positive accounts how it did, but by a probable



hypothesis how it might so happen. The existence of the testimony is a phænomenon; the truth of the fact solves the phænomenon. If we reject this solution, we ought to have some other to rest in; and none, even by our adversaries, can be admitted, which is not inconsistent with the principles that regulate human affairs and human conduct at present, or which makes men *then* to have been a different kind of beings from what they are now.

But the short consideration which, independently of every other, convinces me that there is no solid foundation in Mr. Hume's conclusion, is the following. When a theorem is proposed to a mathematician, the first thing he does with it is to try it upon a simple case, and if it produce a false result, he is sure that there must be some mistake in the demonstration. Now to proceed in this way with what may be called Mr. Hume's theorem. If twelve men, whose probity and good sense I had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impossible that they should be deceived; if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of this account, should call these men into his presence, and offer them a short proposal, either to confess the imposture, or submit to be tied up to a gibbet; if they should refuse with one voice to acknowledge that there existed any falsehood or imposture in the case; if this threat were communicated to them separately, yet with no different effect; if it was at last executed; if I myself saw them, one after another, consenting to be racked, burnt, or strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account;—still, if Mr. Hume's rule be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now I undertake to say that there exists not a sceptic in the world who would not believe them, or who would defend such incredulity.

Instances of spurious miracles supported by strong apparent testimony, undoubtedly demand examination; Mr. Hume has endeavoured to fortify his argument by some examples of this kind. I hope in a proper place to show that none of them reach the strength or circumstances of the Christian evidence. In these, however, consist the weight of his objection: in the principle itself, I am persuaded, there is none.

## PART I.

---

OF THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY,  
AND WHEREIN IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE EVIDENCE  
ALLEGED FOR OTHER MIRACLES.

THE two propositions which I shall endeavour to establish are these :

I. That there is satisfactory evidence that many professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts ; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

II. That there is *not* satisfactory evidence, that persons professing to be original witnesses of other miracles, in their nature as certain as these are, have ever acted in the same manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and properly in consequence of their belief of those accounts.

The first of these propositions, as it forms the argument, will stand at the head of the following *nine* chapters.

---

### CHAPTER I.

*There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts ; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

To support this proposition, two points are necessary to be made out : first, that the Founder of the institution, his associates and immediate followers, acted the part which the proposition imputes to them : secondly, that they did so in attest-

ation of the miraculous history recorded in our Scriptures, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of this history.

Before we produce any particular testimony to the activity and sufferings which compose the subject of our first assertion, it will be proper to consider the degree of probability which the assertion derives from the *nature of the case*, that is, by inferences from those parts of the case which, in point of fact, are on all hands acknowledged.

First, then, the Christian Religion exists, and therefore by some means or other was established. Now it either owes the principle of its establishment, *i. e.* its first publication, to the activity of the Person who was the founder of the institution, and of those who were joined with him in the undertaking, or we are driven upon the strange supposition, that, although they might lie by, others would take it up; although they were quiet and silent, other persons busied themselves in the success and propagation of their story. This is perfectly incredible. To me it appears little less than certain, that, if the first announcing of the religion by the Founder had not been followed up by the zeal and industry of his immediate disciples, the attempt must have expired in its birth. Then as to the kind and degree of exertion which was employed, and the mode of life to which these persons submitted, we reasonably suppose it to be like that which we observe in all others who voluntarily become missionaries of a new faith. Frequent, earnest, and laborious preaching, constantly conversing with religious persons upon religion, a sequestration from the common pleasures, engagements, and varieties of life, and an addiction to one serious object, compose the habits of such men. I do not say that this mode of life is without enjoyment, but I say that the enjoyment springs from sincerity. With a consciousness at the bottom of hollowness and falsehood, the fatigue and restraint would become insupportable. I am apt to believe that very few hypocrites engage in these undertakings; or, however, persist in them long. Ordinarily speaking, nothing can overcome the indolence of mankind, the love which is natural to most tempers of cheerful society and cheerful scenes, or the desire, which is common to all, of personal ease and freedom, but conviction.

Secondly, it is also highly probable, from the nature of the case, that the propagation of the new religion was attended with difficulty and danger. As addressed to the Jews, it was a system adverse not only to their habitual opinions, but to those



opinions upon which their hopes, their partialities, their pride, their consolation, was founded. This people, with or without reason, had worked themselves into a persuasion, that some signal and greatly advantageous change was to be effected in the condition of their country, by the agency of a long-promised messenger from heaven<sup>a</sup>. The rulers of the Jews, their leading sect, their priesthood, had been the authors of this persuasion to the common people. So that it was not merely the conjecture of theoretical divines, or the secret expectation of a few recluse devotees, but it was become the popular hope and passion, and like all popular opinions, undoubting, and impatient of contradiction. They clung to this hope under every misfortune of their country, and with more tenacity as their dangers or calamities increased. To find, therefore, that expectations so gratifying were to be worse than disappointed; that they were to end in the diffusion of a mild unambitious religion, which, instead of victories and triumphs, instead of exalting their nation and institution above the rest of the world, was to advance those whom they despised to an equality with themselves, in those very points of comparison in which they most valued their own distinction, could be no very pleasing discovery to a Jewish mind; nor could the messengers of such intelligence expect to be well received or easily credited. The doctrine was equally harsh and novel. The extending of the kingdom of God to those who did not conform to the law of Moses, was a notion that had never before entered into the thoughts of a Jew.

The character of the new institution was, in other respects also, ungrateful to Jewish habits and principles. Their own religion was in a high degree technical. Even the enlightened Jew placed a great deal of stress upon the ceremonies of his law, saw in them a great deal of virtue and efficacy; the gross and vulgar had scarcely any thing else; and the hypocritical and ostentatious magnified them above measure, as being the instruments of their own reputation and influence. The Christian scheme, without formally repealing the Levitical code, lowered its estimation extremely. In the place of strict-

<sup>a</sup> "Percrebuerat oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut eo tempore Judæa profecti rerum potirentur." Sueton. Vespasian. cap. 4—8.

"Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret oriens, profectique Judæa rerum potirentur." Tacit. Hist. lib. v. cap. 9—13.

ness and zeal in performing the observances which that code prescribed, or which tradition had added to it, the new sect preached up faith, well-regulated affections, inward purity, and moral rectitude of disposition, as the true ground, on the part of the worshipper, of merit and acceptance with God. This, however rational it may appear, or recommending to us at present, did not by any means facilitate the plan then. On the contrary, to disparage those qualities which the highest characters in the country valued themselves most upon, was a sure way of making powerful enemies. As if the frustration of the national hope was not enough, the long-esteemed merit of ritual zeal and punctuality was to be decried, and that by Jews preaching to Jews.

The ruling party at Jerusalem had just before crucified the Founder of the religion. That is a fact which will not be disputed. They, therefore, who stood forth to preach the religion must necessarily reproach these rulers with an execution, which they could not but represent as an unjust and cruel murder. This would not render their office more easy, or their situation more safe.

With regard to the interference of the Roman government which was then established in Judea, I should not expect, that, despising as it did the religion of the country, it would, if left to itself, animadvert, either with much vigilance or much severity, upon the schisms and controversies which arose within it. Yet there was that in Christianity which might easily afford a handle of accusation with a jealous government. The Christians avowed an unqualified obedience to a new master. They avowed also that he was the person who had been foretold to the Jews under the suspected title of King. The spiritual nature of this kingdom, the consistency of this obedience with civil subjection, were distinctions too refined to be entertained by a Roman president, who viewed the business at a great distance, or through the medium of very hostile representations. Our histories accordingly inform us, that this was the turn which the enemies of Jesus gave to his character and pretensions in their remonstrances with Pontius Pilate. And Justin Martyr, about a hundred years afterwards, complains that the same mistake prevailed in his time: "Ye, having heard that we are waiting for a kingdom, suppose, without distinguishing, that we mean a human kingdom, when in truth we speak



of that which is with God."<sup>a</sup> And it was undoubtedly a natural source of calumny and misconstruction.

The preachers of Christianity had, therefore, to contend with prejudice backed by power. They had to come forward to a disappointed people, to a priesthood possessing a considerable share of municipal authority, and actuated by strong motives of opposition and resentment; and they had to do this under a foreign government, to whose favour they made no pretensions, and which was constantly surrounded by their enemies. The well-known, because the experienced fate of reformers, whenever the reformation subverts some reigning opinion, and does not proceed upon a change that has already taken place in the sentiments of a country, will not allow, much less lead us to suppose, that the first propagators of Christianity at Jerusalem and in Judea, under the difficulties and the enemies they had to contend with, and entirely destitute as they were of force, authority, or protection, could execute their mission with personal ease and safety.

Let us next inquire, what might reasonably be expected by the preachers of Christianity when they turned themselves to the heathen public. Now the first thing that strikes us is, that the religion they carried with them was *exclusive*. It denied without reserve the truth of every article of heathen mythology, the existence of every object of their worship. It accepted no compromise, it admitted no comprehension. It must prevail, if it prevailed at all, by the overthrow of every statue, altar, and temple, in the world. It will not easily be credited, that a design, so bold as this was, could in any age be attempted to be carried into execution with impunity.

For it ought to be considered, that this was not setting forth, or magnifying the character and worship of some new competitor for a place in the Pantheon, whose pretensions might be discussed or asserted without questioning the reality of any others; it was pronouncing all other gods to be false, and all other worship vain. From the facility with which the polytheism of ancient nations admitted new objects of worship into the number of their acknowledged divinities, or the patience with which they might entertain proposals of this kind, we can argue nothing as to their toleration of a system, or of the publishers and active propagators of a system, which swept away the very foundation of the existing establishment. The

<sup>a</sup> Ap. I<sup>ma</sup>, p. 16. Ed. Thirl.

one was nothing more than what it would be, in popish countries, to add a saint to the calendar; the other was to abolish and tread under foot the calendar itself.

Secondly, it ought also to be considered, that this was not the case of philosophers propounding in their books, or in their schools, doubts concerning the truth of the popular creed, or even avowing their disbelief of it. These philosophers did not go about from place to place to collect proselytes from amongst the common people; to form in the heart of the country societies professing their tenets; to provide for the order, instruction, and permanency of these societies; nor did they enjoin their followers to withdraw themselves from the public worship of the temples, or refuse a compliance with rites instituted by the laws<sup>a</sup>. These things are what the Christians did, and what the philosophers did not; and in these consisted the activity and danger of the enterprise.

Thirdly, it ought also to be considered, that this danger proceeded not merely from solemn acts and public resolutions of the state, but from sudden bursts of violence at particular places, from the licence of the populace, the rashness of some magistrates and negligence of others; from the influence and instigation of interested adversaries, and, in general, from the variety and warmth of opinion which an errand so novel and extraordinary could not fail of exciting. I can conceive that the teachers of Christianity might both fear and suffer much from these causes, without any general persecution being denounced against them by imperial authority. Some length of time, I should suppose, might pass, before the vast machine of the Roman empire would be put in motion, or its attention be obtained to religious controversy: but, during that time, a great deal of ill usage might be endured, by a set of friendless, unprotected travellers, telling men, wherever they came, that the religion of their ancestors, the religion in which they had been brought up, the religion of the state, and of the magistrate, the rites which they frequented, the pomp which they admired, was throughout a system of folly and delusion.

Nor do I think that the teachers of Christianity would find protection in that general disbelief of the popular theology,

<sup>a</sup> The best of the ancient philosophers, Plato, Cicero, and Epictetus, allowed, or rather enjoined, men to worship the gods of the country, and in the established form. See passages to this purpose collected from their works by Dr. Clarke, *Nat. and Rev. Rel.* p. 180. ed. v.—Except Socrates, they all thought it wiser to comply with the laws than to contend.

which is supposed to have prevailed amongst the intelligent part of the heathen public. It is by no means true that unbelievers are usually tolerant. They are not disposed, (and why should they ?) to endanger the present state of things, by suffering a religion of which they believe nothing to be disturbed by another of which they believe as little. They are ready themselves to conform to any thing ; and are, oftentimes, amongst the foremost to procure conformity from others, by any method which they think likely to be efficacious. When was ever a change of religion patronized by infidels ? How little, notwithstanding the reigning scepticism, and the magnified liberality of that age, the true principles of toleration were understood by the wisest men amongst them, may be gathered from two eminent and uncontested examples. The younger Pliny, polished as he was by all the literature of that soft and elegant period, could gravely pronounce this monstrous judgment :—“Those who persisted in declaring themselves Christians, I ordered to be led away to punishment, (*i. e.* to execution,) for I DID NOT DOUBT, *whatever it was that they confessed, that contumacy and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished.*” His master, Trajan, a mild and accomplished prince, went, nevertheless, no further in his sentiments of moderation and equity than what appears in the following rescript : “The Christians are not to be sought for ; but if any are brought before you, and convicted, they are to be punished.” And this direction he gives, after it had been reported to him by his own president, that, by the most strict examination, nothing could be discovered in the principles of these persons, but “a bad and excessive superstition,” accompanied, it seems, with an oath or mutual federation, “to allow themselves in no crime or immoral conduct whatever.” The truth is, the ancient heathens considered religion entirely as an affair of state, as much under the tuition of the magistrate, as any other part of the police. The religion of that age was not merely allied to the state ; it was incorporated into it. Many of its offices were administered by the magistrate. Its titles of pontiffs, augurs, and flamens, were borne by senators, consuls, and generals. Without discussing, therefore, the truth of the theology, they resented every affront put upon the established worship, as a direct opposition to the authority of government.

Add to which, that the religious systems of those times, however ill supported by evidence, had been long established. The



*ancient* religion of a country has always many votaries, and sometimes not the fewer, because its origin is hidden in remoteness and obscurity. Men have a natural veneration for antiquity, especially in matters of religion. What Tacitus says of the Jewish, was more applicable to the heathen establishment: “*Hi ritus, quoquo modo inducti, antiquitate defenduntur.*” It was also a splendid and sumptuous worship. It had its priesthood, its endowments, its temples. Statuary, painting, architecture, and music contributed their effect to its ornament and magnificence. It abounded in festival shows and solemnities, to which the common people are greatly addicted, and which were of a nature to engage them much more than any thing of that sort among us. These things would retain great numbers on its side by the fascination of spectacle and pomp, as well as interest many in its preservation by the advantage which they drew from it. “It was moreover interwoven,” as Mr. Gibbon rightly represents it, “with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or private life, with all the offices and amusements of society.” On the due celebration also of its rites, the people were taught to believe, and did believe, that the prosperity of their country in a great measure depended.

I am willing to accept the account of the matter which is given by Mr. Gibbon: “The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful:” and I would ask from which of these three classes of men were the Christian missionaries to look for protection or impunity? Could they expect it from the people, “whose acknowledged confidence in the public religion” they subverted from its foundation? From the philosopher, who, “considering all religions as equally false,” would of course rank theirs among the number, with the addition of regarding them as busy and troublesome zealots? Or from the magistrate, who, satisfied with the “utility” of the subsisting religion, would not be likely to countenance a spirit of proselytism and innovation;—a system which declared war against every other, and which, if it prevailed, must end in a total rupture of public opinion; an upstart religion, in a word, which was not content with its own authority, but must disgrace all the settled religions of the world? It was not to be imagined that he would endure with patience, that the religion

of the emperor and of the state should be calumniated and borne down by a company of superstitious and despicable Jews.

Lastly ; the *nature of the case* affords a strong proof, that the original teachers of Christianity, in consequence of their new profession, entered upon a new and singular course of life. We may be allowed to presume, that the institution which they preached to others, they conformed to in their own persons ; because this is no more than what every teacher of a new religion both does, and must do, in order to obtain either proselytes or hearers. The change which this would produce was very considerable. It is a change which we do not easily estimate, because, ourselves and all about us being habituated to the institutions from our infancy, it is what we neither experience nor observe. After men became Christians, much of their time was spent in prayer and devotion, in religious meetings, in celebrating the eucharist, in conferences, in exhortations, in preaching, in an affectionate intercourse with one another, and correspondence with other societies. Perhaps their mode of life, in its form and habit, was not very unlike the *Unitas Fratrum*, or the modern Methodists. Think then what it was to become *such* at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Antioch, or even at Jerusalem. How new ! how alien from all their former habits and ideas, and from those of every body about them ! What a revolution there must have been of opinions and prejudices to bring the matter to this !

We know what the precepts of the religion are ; how pure, how benevolent, how disinterested a conduct they enjoin ; and that this purity and benevolence are extended to the very thoughts and affections. We are not, perhaps, at liberty to take for granted that the lives of the preachers of Christianity were as perfect as their lessons ; but we are entitled to contend, that the observable part of their behaviour must have agreed in a great measure with the duties which they taught. There was, therefore, (which is all that we assert,) a course of life pursued by them, different from that which they before led. And this is of great importance. Men are brought to any thing almost sooner than to change their habit of life, especially when the change is either inconvenient, or made against the force of natural inclination, or with the loss of accustomed indulgences. " It is the most difficult of all things to convert men from vicious habits to virtuous ones, as every one may judge from what he feels in himself, as well as from what he sees in others." <sup>a</sup> It is almost like making men over again.

<sup>a</sup> Hartley's *Essays on Man*, p. 190.



Left then to myself, and without any more information than a knowledge of the existence of the religion, of the general story upon which it is founded, and that no act of power, force, and authority, was concerned in its first success, I should conclude, from the very nature and exigency of the case, that the Author of the religion, during his life, and his immediate disciples after his death, *exerted* themselves in spreading and publishing the institution throughout the country in which it began, and into which it was first carried ; that, in the prosecution of this purpose, they underwent the labours and troubles which we observe the propagators of new sects to undergo ; that the attempt must necessarily have also been in a high degree dangerous ; that, from the subject of the mission, compared with the fixed opinions and prejudices of those to whom the missionaries were to address themselves, they could hardly fail of encountering strong and frequent opposition ; that, by the hand of government, as well as from the sudden fury and unbridled licence of the people, they would oftentimes experience injurious and cruel treatment ; that, at any rate, they must have always had so much to fear for their personal safety, as to have passed their lives in a state of constant peril and anxiety ; and lastly, that their mode of life and conduct, visibly at least, corresponded with the institution which they delivered, and, so far, was both new, and required continual self-denial.

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## CHAPTER II.

*There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts ; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

AFTER thus considering what was *likely* to happen, we are next to inquire how the transaction is represented in the several accounts that have come down to us. And this inquiry is properly preceded by the other, forasmuch as the reception of these accounts may depend in part on the credibility of what they contain.

The obscure and distant view of Christianity, which some of the heathen writers of that age had gained, and which a few passages in their remaining works incidentally discover to us, offers itself to our notice in the first place : because, so far as this evidence goes, it is the concession of adversaries ; the source from which it is drawn is unsuspected. Under this head, a quotation from Tacitus, well known to every scholar, must be inserted, as deserving particular attention. The reader will bear in mind that this passage was written about seventy years after Christ's death, and that it relates to transactions which took place about thirty years after that event.—Speaking of the fire which happened at Rome in the time of Nero, and of the suspicions which were entertained that the emperor himself was concerned in causing it, the historian proceeds in his narrative and observations thus :

“ But neither these exertions, nor his largesses to the people, nor his offerings to the gods, did away the infamous imputation under which Nero lay, of having ordered the city to be set on fire. To put an end, therefore, to this report, he laid the guilt, and inflicted the most cruel punishments, upon a set of people, who were holden in abhorrence for their crimes, and called by the vulgar, *Christians*. The founder of that name was Christ, who suffered death in the reign of Tiberius, under his procurator, Pontius Pilate.—This pernicious superstition, thus checked for a while, broke out again ; and spread not only over Judea, where the evil originated, but through Rome also, whither every thing bad upon the earth finds its way and is practised. Some who confessed their sect were first seized, and afterwards, by their information, a vast multitude were apprehended, who were convicted, not so much of the crime of burning Rome, as of hatred to mankind. Their sufferings at their execution were aggravated by insult and mockery ; for some were disguised in the skins of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs ; some were crucified ; and others were wrapped in pitched shirts<sup>a</sup>, and set on fire when the day closed, that they might serve as lights to illuminate the night. Nero lent his own gardens for these executions, and exhibited at the same time a mock Circensian entertainment ; being a spectator of the whole, in the dress of a charioteer, sometimes mingling with

<sup>a</sup> This is rather a paraphrase, but is justified by what the Scholiast upon Juvenal says ; “ Nero maleficos homines tædâ et papyro et cerâ supervestiebat, et sic ad ignem admoveri jubebat.” Lard. Jewish. and Heath. Test. vol. i. p. 359.

the crowd on foot, and sometimes viewing the spectacle from his car. This conduct made the sufferers pitied; and though they were criminals, and deserving the severest punishments, yet they were considered as sacrificed, not so much out of a regard to the public good, as to gratify the cruelty of one man."

Our concern with this passage at present is only so far as it affords a presumption in support of the proposition which we maintain, concerning the activity and sufferings of the first teachers of Christianity. Now considered in this view, it proves three things: 1st, that the Founder of the institution was put to death; 2dly, that in the same country in which he was put to death, the religion, after a short check, broke out again and spread; 3dly, that it so spread, as that within thirty-four years from the Author's death, a very great number of Christians (*ingens eorum multitudo*) were found at Rome. From which fact, the two following inferences may be fairly drawn: first, that if, in the space of thirty-four years from its commencement, the religion had spread throughout Judea, had extended itself to Rome, and there had numbered a great multitude of converts, the original teachers and missionaries of the institution could not have been *idle*; secondly, that when the Author of the undertaking was put to death as a malefactor for his attempt, the endeavours of his followers to establish his religion in the same country, amongst the same people, and in the same age, could not but be attended with danger.

Suetonius, a writer contemporary with Tacitus, describing the transactions of the same reign, uses these words: "Affecti supplicii Christiani genus hominum superstitionis novæ et maleficæ."<sup>a</sup> "The Christians, a set of men of a new and mischievous (or magical) superstition, were punished."

Since it is not mentioned *here* that the burning of the city was the pretence of the punishment of the Christians, or that they were the Christians of Rome who alone suffered, it is probable that Suetonius refers to some more general persecution than the short and occasional one which Tacitus describes.

Juvenal, a writer of the same age with the two former, and intending, it should seem, to commemorate the cruelties exercised under Nero's government, has the following lines<sup>b</sup>:

"Pone Tigellinum, tædâ lucebis in illâ,  
Quâ stantes ardent, qui fixo gutture fumant,  
Et latum mediâ sulcum deducit<sup>c</sup> arenâ."

<sup>a</sup> Suet. Nero. cap. 16.

<sup>b</sup> Sat. i. ver. 155.

<sup>c</sup> Forsan "deducis."



“Describe Tigellinus, (a creature of Nero,) and you shall suffer the same punishment with those who stand burning in their own flame and smoke, their head being held up by a stake fixed to their chin, till they make a long stream of blood and melted sulphur on the ground.”

If this passage were considered by itself, the subject of allusion might be doubtful; but, when connected with the testimony of Suetonius, as to the actual punishment of the Christians by Nero, and with the account given by Tacitus of the *species* of punishment which they were made to undergo, I think it sufficiently probable, that these were the executions to which the poet refers.

These things, as has already been observed, took place within thirty-one years after Christ's death, that is, according to the course of nature, in the lifetime, probably, of some of the apostles, and certainly in the lifetime of those who were converted by the apostles, or who were converted in their time. If then the founder of the religion was put to death in the execution of his design; if the first race of converts to the religion, many of them, suffered the greatest extremities for their profession; it is hardly credible, that those who came *between* the two, who were companions of the Author of the institution during his life, and the teachers and propagators of the institution after his death, could go about their undertaking with ease and safety.

The testimony of the younger Pliny belongs to a later period; for although he was contemporary with Tacitus and Suetonius, yet his account does not, like theirs, go back to the transactions of Nero's reign, but is confined to the affairs of his own time. His celebrated letter to Trajan was written about seventy years after Christ's death; and the information to be drawn from it, so far as it is connected with our argument, relates principally to two points: first, to the *number* of Christians in Bithynia and Pontus, which was so considerable as to induce the governor of these provinces to speak of them in the following terms: “Multi, omnis ætatis, utriusque sextûs etiam;—neque enim civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam et agros, superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est.” “There are many of every age and of both sexes;—nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but smaller towns also, and the open country.” Great exertions must have been used by the preachers of Christianity to produce this state of things within this time. Secondly, to a point which has been already noticed, and

which I think of importance to be observed, namely, the sufferings to which Christians were exposed, *without* any public persecution being denounced against them by sovereign authority. For, from Pliny's doubt how he was to act, his silence concerning any subsisting law on the subject, his requesting the emperor's rescript, and the emperor, agreeably to his request, propounding a rule for his direction, without reference to any prior rule, it may be inferred, that there was, at that time, no public edict in force against the Christians. Yet from this same epistle of Pliny it appears, "that accusations, trials, and examinations, were, and had been, going on against them in the provinces over which he presided; that schedules were delivered by anonymous informers, containing the names of persons who were suspected of holding or of favouring the religion; that, in consequence of these informations, many had been apprehended, of whom some boldly avowed their profession, and died in the cause; others denied that they were Christians; others, acknowledging that they had once been Christians, declared that they had long ceased to be such." All which demonstrates, that the profession of Christianity was at that time (in that country at least) attended with fear and danger: and yet this took place without any edict from the Roman sovereign, commanding or authorizing the persecution of Christians. This observation is further confirmed by a rescript of Adrian to Minucius Fundanus, the proconsul of Asia<sup>a</sup>: from which rescript it appears that the custom of the people of Asia was to proceed against the Christians with tumult and uproar. This disorderly practice, I say, is recognised in the edict, because the emperor enjoins, that, for the future, if the Christians were guilty, they should be legally brought to trial, and not be pursued by importunity and clamour.

Martial wrote a few years before the younger Pliny: and, as his manner was, made the suffering of the Christians the subject of his ridicule<sup>b</sup>. Nothing, however, could show the notoriety of the fact with more certainty than this does. Martial's testi-

<sup>a</sup> Lard. Heath. Test. vol. ii. p. 110.

<sup>b</sup> In matutinâ nuper spectatus arenâ  
Mucius, imposuit qui sua membra focis,  
Si patiens fortisque tibi durusque videtur,  
Abderitanæ pectora plebis habes;  
Nam cum dicatur, tunicâ præsentemolestâ,  
Ure\* manum: plus est dicere, Non facio.

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\* Forsan "thure manum."



mony, as well indeed as Pliny's, goes also to another point, viz. that the deaths of these men were martyrdoms in the strictest sense, that is to say, were so voluntary, that it was in their power, at the time of pronouncing the sentence, to have averted the execution by consenting to join in heathen sacrifices.

The constancy, and by consequence the sufferings of the Christians of this period, is also referred to by Epictetus, who imputes their intrepidity to madness, or to a kind of fashion or habit; and about fifty years afterwards, by Marcus Aurelius, who ascribes it to obstinacy. "Is it possible (Epictetus asks) that a man may arrive at this temper, and become indifferent to those things, from madness or from habit, *as the Galileans?*"<sup>a</sup> "Let this preparation of the mind (to die) arise from its own judgment, and not from obstinacy *like the Christians.*"<sup>b</sup>

### CHAPTER III.

*There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

OF the primitive condition of Christianity, a distant only and general view can be acquired from heathen writers. It is in our own books that the detail and interior of the transaction must be sought for. And this is nothing different from what might be expected. Who would write a history of Christianity, but a Christian? Who was likely to record the travels, sufferings, labours, or successes of the apostles, but one of their own number, or of their followers? Now these books come up in their accounts to the full extent of the proposition which we maintain. We have four histories of Jesus Christ. We have a history taking up the narrative from his death, and carrying on an account of the propagation of the religion, and of some of the most eminent persons engaged in it, for a space of nearly thirty years. We have, what some may think still more original, a collection of letters, written by certain principal agents in the

<sup>a</sup> Epict. l. iv. c. 7.

<sup>b</sup> Marc. Aur. Med. l. xi. c. 3.

business, upon the business, and in the midst of their concern and connexion with it. And we have these writings severally attesting the point which we contend for, viz. the sufferings of the witnesses of the history, and attesting it in every variety of form in which it can be conceived to appear: directly and indirectly, expressly and incidentally, by assertion, recital, and allusion, by narratives of facts, and by arguments and discourses built upon these facts, either referring to them, or necessarily presupposing them.

I remark this variety, because, in examining ancient records, or indeed any species of testimony, it is, in my opinion, of the greatest importance to attend to the information or grounds of argument which are *casually* and *undesignedly* disclosed; forasmuch as this species of proof is, of all others, the least liable to be corrupted by fraud or misrepresentation.

I may be allowed, therefore, in the inquiry which is now before us, to suggest some conclusions of this sort, as preparatory to more direct testimony.

1. Our books relate, that Jesus Christ, the founder of the religion, was, in consequence of his undertaking, put to death, as a malefactor, at Jerusalem. This point at least will be granted, because it is no more than what Tacitus has recorded. They then proceed to tell us, that the religion was, *notwithstanding*, set forth at this same city of Jerusalem, propagated thence throughout Judea, and afterwards preached in other parts of the Roman empire. These points also are fully confirmed by Tacitus, who informs us, that the religion, after a short check, broke out again in the country where it took its rise; that it not only spread throughout Judea, but had reached Rome, and that it had there great multitudes of converts: and all this within thirty years after its commencement. Now these facts afford a strong inference in behalf of the proposition which we maintain. What could the disciples of Christ expect for themselves when they saw their master put to death? Could they hope to escape the dangers in which he had perished? If they had persecuted me, they will also persecute you, was the warning of common sense. With this example before their eyes, they could not be without a full sense of the peril of their future enterprise.

2. Secondly, all the histories agree in representing Christ as foretelling the persecution of his followers:—

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxiv. 9.

“When affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended.”<sup>a</sup>

“They shall lay hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake :—and ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolks and friends, and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.”<sup>b</sup>

“The time cometh, that he that killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.”<sup>c</sup>

I am not entitled to argue from these passages, that Christ actually did foretell these events, and that they did accordingly come to pass ; because that would be at once to assume the truth of the religion : but I am entitled to contend, that one side or other of the following disjunction is true ; either that the Evangelists have delivered what Christ really spoke, and that the event corresponded with the prediction ; or that they put the prediction into Christ’s mouth, because, at the time of writing the history, the event had turned out so to be : for, the only two remaining suppositions appear in the highest degree incredible ; which are, either that Christ filled the minds of his followers with fears and apprehensions, without any reason or authority for what he said, and contrary to the truth of the case ; or that, although Christ had never foretold any such thing, and the event would have contradicted him if he had, yet historians who lived in the age when the event was known, falsely, as well as officiously, ascribed these words to him.

3. Thirdly, these books abound with exhortations to patience, and with topics of comfort under distress.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”<sup>d</sup>

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; we are perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed ; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be

<sup>a</sup> Mark iv. 17. See also chap. x. 30.      <sup>b</sup> Luke xxi. 12—16. See also chap. xi. 49.

<sup>c</sup> John xvi. 4. See also chap. xv. 20 ; xvi. 33.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. viii. 35—37.



made manifest in our body;—knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.—For which cause we faint not; but, though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”<sup>a</sup>

“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”<sup>b</sup>

“Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used; for ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward; for ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”<sup>c</sup>

“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure. Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom for which ye also suffer.”<sup>d</sup>

“We rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.”<sup>e</sup>

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings.—Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”<sup>f</sup>

What could all these texts mean, if there was nothing in the circumstances of the times which required patience,—which called for the exercise of constancy and resolution? Or will it

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17.    <sup>b</sup> James v. 10, 11.    <sup>c</sup> Heb. x. 32–36.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Thess. i. 4, 5.

<sup>e</sup> Rom. v. 3, 4.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13, 19.

be pretended, that these exhortations (which, let it be observed, come not from one author, but from many) were put in, merely to induce a belief in after-ages, that the Christians were exposed to dangers which they were not exposed to, or underwent sufferings which they did not undergo? If these books belong to the age to which they lay claim, and in which age, whether genuine or spurious, they certainly did appear, this supposition cannot be maintained for a moment; because I think it impossible to believe, that passages, which must be deemed, not only unintelligible, but false, by the persons into whose hands the books upon their publication were to come, should nevertheless be inserted, for the purpose of producing an effect upon remote generations. In forgeries which do not appear till many ages after that to which they pretend to belong, it is possible that some contrivance of that sort may take place; but in no others can it be attempted.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

*There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

THE account of the treatment of the religion, and of the exertions of its first preachers, as stated in our Scriptures, (not in a professed history of persecutions, or in the connected manner in which I am about to recite it, but dispersedly and occasionally, in the course of a mixed general history, which circumstance alone negatives the supposition of any fraudulent design,) is the following: "That the Founder of Christianity, from the commencement of his ministry to the time of his violent death, employed himself wholly in publishing the institution in Judea and Galilee; that, in order to assist him in this purpose, he made choice out of the number of his followers, of twelve persons, who might accompany him as he travelled from place to place; that, except a short absence upon a journey in which he sent them, two by two, to announce his mission, and one of a few days, when they went before him to Jerusalem, these per-



sons were steadily and constantly attending upon him ; that they were with him at Jerusalem when he was apprehended and put to death ; and that they were commissioned by him, when his own ministry was concluded, to publish his Gospel, and collect disciples to it from all countries of the world." The account then proceeds to state, " that a few days after his departure, these persons, with some of his relations, and some who had regularly frequented their society, assembled at Jerusalem ; that, considering the office of preaching the religion as now devolved upon them, and one of their number having deserted the cause, and, repenting of his perfidy, having destroyed himself, they proceeded to elect another into his place, and that they were careful to make their election out of the number of those who had accompanied their master from the first to the last, in order, as they alleged, that he might be a witness, together with themselves, of the principal facts which they were about to produce and relate concerning him <sup>a</sup> ; that they began their work at Jerusalem by publicly asserting that this Jesus, whom the rulers and inhabitants of that place had so lately crucified, was, in truth, the person in whom all their prophecies and long expectations terminated ; that he had been sent amongst them by God ; and that he was appointed by God the future judge of the human species ; that all who were solicitous to secure to themselves happiness after death, ought to receive him as such, and to make profession of their belief, by being baptized in his name."<sup>b</sup> The history goes on to relate, " that considerable numbers accepted this proposal, and that they who did so, formed amongst themselves a strict union and society <sup>c</sup> ; that the attention of the Jewish government being soon drawn upon them, two of the principal persons of the twelve, and who also had lived most intimately and constantly with the Founder of the religion, were seized as they were discoursing to the people in the temple ; that after being kept all night in prison, they were brought the next day before an assembly composed of the chief persons of the Jewish magistracy and priesthood ; that this assembly, after some consultation, found nothing, at that time, better to be done towards suppressing the growth of the sect, than to threaten their prisoners with punishment if they persisted ; that these men, after expressing, in decent but firm language, the obligation under which they considered themselves to be, to declare what they knew, ' to speak the things which

<sup>a</sup> Acts i. 12, 22.<sup>b</sup> Acts xi.<sup>c</sup> Acts iv. 32.

they had seen and heard,' returned from the council, and reported what had passed to their companions; that this report, whilst it apprized them of the danger of their situation and undertaking, had no other effect upon their conduct than to produce in them a general resolution to persevere, and an earnest prayer to God to furnish them with assistance, and to inspire them with fortitude, proportioned to the increasing exigency of the service."<sup>a</sup> A very short time after this, we read "that all the twelve apostles were seized and cast into prison<sup>b</sup>; that being brought a second time before the Jewish Sanhedrim, they were upbraided with their disobedience to the injunction which had been laid upon them, and beaten for their contumacy; that, being charged once more to desist, they were suffered to depart; that however they neither quitted Jerusalem, nor ceased from preaching, both daily in the temple, and from house to house<sup>c</sup>; and that the twelve considered themselves as so entirely and exclusively devoted to this office, that they now transferred what may be called the temporal affairs of the society to other hands."<sup>d</sup>

Hitherto the preachers of the new religion seem to have had the common people on their side; which is assigned as the reason why the Jewish rulers did not, at this time, think it prudent to proceed to greater extremities. It was not long, however, before the enemies of the institution found means to represent it to the people as tending to subvert their law, degrade their law-giver, and dishonour their temple<sup>e</sup>. And these insinuations were dispersed with so much success, as to induce the

<sup>a</sup> Acts iv.<sup>b</sup> Acts v. 18.<sup>c</sup> Acts v. 42.

<sup>d</sup> I do not know that it has ever been insinuated, that the Christian mission, in the hands of the apostles, was a scheme for making a fortune, or for getting money. But it may nevertheless be fit to remark upon this passage of their history, how perfectly free they appear to have been from any pecuniary or interested views whatever. The most tempting opportunity which occurred, of making a gain of their converts, was by the custody and management of the public funds, when some of the richer members, intending to contribute their fortunes to the common support of the society, sold their possessions, and laid down the prices at the apostles' feet. Yet, so insensible, or undesirous, were they of the advantage which that confidence afforded, that we find, they very soon disposed of the trust, by putting it into the hands, not of nominees of their own, but of stewards formally elected for the purpose by the society at large.

We may add also, that this excess of generosity, which cast private property into the public stock, was so far from being required by the apostles, or imposed as a law of Christianity, that Peter reminds Ananias that he had been guilty, in his behaviour, of an officious and voluntary prevarication; "for whilst," says he, "thy estate remained unsold, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?"

<sup>e</sup> Acts vi. 12.

people to join with their superiors in the stoning of a very active member of the new community.

The death of this man was the signal of a general persecution, the activity of which may be judged of from one anecdote of the time:—"As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison."<sup>a</sup> This persecution raged at Jerusalem with so much fury, as to drive<sup>b</sup> most of the new converts out of the place, except the twelve apostles. The converts, thus "scattered abroad," preached the religion wherever they came; and their preaching was, in effect, the preaching of the *twelve*; for it was so far carried on in concert and correspondence with *them*, that when they heard of the success of their emissaries in a particular country, they sent two of their number to the place, to complete and confirm the mission.

An event now took place, of great importance in the future history of the religion. The persecution<sup>c</sup> which had begun at Jerusalem followed the Christians to other cities, in which the authority of the Jewish Sanhedrim over those of their own nation was allowed to be exercised. A young man, who had signalized himself by his hostility to the profession, and had procured a commission from the council at Jerusalem to seize any converted Jews whom he might find at Damascus, suddenly became a proselyte to the religion which he was going about to extirpate. The new convert not only shared, on this extraordinary change, the fate of his companions, but brought upon himself a double measure of enmity from the party which he had left. The Jews at Damascus, on his return to that city, watched the gates night and day, with so much diligence, that he escaped from their hands only by being let down in a basket by the wall. Nor did he find himself in greater safety at Jerusalem, whither he immediately repaired. Attempts were there also soon set on foot to destroy him; from the danger of which he was preserved by being sent away to Cilicia, his native country.

For some reason, not mentioned, perhaps not known, but probably connected with the civil history of the Jews, or with

<sup>a</sup> Acts viii. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Acts viii. 1 "And they were *all* scattered abroad:" but the term "*all*" is not, I think, to be taken strictly, as denoting more than the *generality*; in like manner as in Acts ix. 35. "And *all* that dwelt at Lydda and Saron, saw him, and turned to the Lord."

<sup>c</sup> Acts ix.



some danger<sup>a</sup> which engrossed the public attention, an intermission about this time took place in the sufferings of the Christians. This happened, at the most, only seven or eight, perhaps only three or four years after Christ's death. Within which period, and notwithstanding that the late persecution occupied part of it, churches, or societies of believers, had been formed in all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria; for we read that the churches in these countries "had *now rest*, and were edified, and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."<sup>b</sup> The original preachers of the religion did not remit their labours or activity during this season of quietness; for we find one, and he a very principal person among them, passing throughout all quarters. We find also those who had been before expelled from Jerusalem by the persecution which raged there, travelling as far as Phœnice, Cyprus, and Antioch<sup>c</sup>; and lastly, we find Jerusalem again in the centre of the mission, the place whither the preachers returned from their several excursions, where they reported the conduct and effects of their ministry, where questions of public concern were canvassed and settled, whence directions were sought, and teachers sent forth.

The time of this tranquillity did not, however, continue long. Herod Agrippa, who had lately acceded to the government of Judea, "stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church."<sup>d</sup> He began his cruelty by beheading one of the twelve original apostles, a kinsman and constant companion of the Founder of the religion. Perceiving that this execution gratified the Jews, he proceeded to seize, in order to put to death, another of the number,—and him, like the former, associated with Christ during his life, and eminently active in the service since his death. This man was, however, delivered from prison, as the account states<sup>e</sup>, miraculously, and made his escape from Jerusalem.

These things are related, not in the general terms under which, in giving the outlines of the history, we have here mentioned them, but with the utmost particularity of names, persons, places, and circumstances; and, what is deserving of notice, without the smallest discoverable propensity in the his-

<sup>a</sup> Dr. Lardner (in which he is followed also by Dr. Benson) ascribes the cessation of the persecution of the Christians to the attempt of Caligula to set up his own statue in the temple of Jerusalem, and to the consternation thereby excited in the minds of the Jewish people; which consternation for a season suspended every other contest.

<sup>b</sup> Acts ix. 31.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xi. 19.

<sup>d</sup> Acts xii. 1.

<sup>e</sup> Acts xii. 3—17.



torian to magnify the fortitude, or exaggerate the sufferings, of his party. When they fled for their lives, he tells us. When the churches had rest, he remarks it. When the people took their part, he does not leave it without notice. When the apostles were carried a second time before the Sanhedrim, he is careful to observe that they were brought without violence. When milder counsels were suggested, he gives us the author of the advice, and the speech which contained it. When, in consequence of this advice, the rulers contented themselves with threatening the apostles, and commanding them to be beaten with stripes, without urging at that time the persecution further, the historian candidly and distinctly records their forbearance. When, therefore, in other instances, he states heavier persecutions, or actual martyrdoms, it is reasonable to believe that he states them because they were true, and not from any wish to aggravate, in his account, the sufferings which Christians sustained, or to extol, more than it deserved, their patience under them.

Our history now pursues a narrower path. Leaving the rest of the apostles, and the original associates of Christ, engaged in the propagation of the new faith, (and who there is not the least reason to believe abated in their diligence or courage,) the narrative proceeds with the separate memoirs of that eminent teacher, whose extraordinary and sudden conversion to the religion, and corresponding change of conduct, had before been circumstantially described. This person, in conjunction with another, who appeared among the earlier members of the society at Jerusalem, and amongst the immediate adherents <sup>a</sup> of the twelve apostles, set out from Antioch upon the express business of carrying the new religion through the various provinces of the Lesser Asia <sup>b</sup>. During this expedition, we find that, in almost every place to which they came, their persons were insulted, and their lives endangered. After being expelled from Antioch in Pisidia, they repaired to Iconium <sup>c</sup>. At Iconium, an attempt was made to stone them; at Lystra, whither they fled from Iconium, one of them actually was stoned and drawn out of the city for dead <sup>d</sup>. These two men, though not themselves original apostles, were acting in connexion and conjunction with the original apostles; for, after the completion of their journey, being sent on a particular commission to Jerusalem, they there

<sup>a</sup> Acts iv. 36.<sup>b</sup> Acts xiii. 2.<sup>c</sup> Acts xiii. 51.<sup>d</sup> Acts xiv. 19.

related to the apostles<sup>a</sup> and elders the events and success of their ministry, and were, in return, recommended by them to the churches, “as men who had hazarded their lives in the cause.”

The treatment which they had experienced in the first progress did not deter them from preparing for a second. Upon a dispute, however, arising between them, but not connected with the common subject of their labours, they acted as wise and sincere men would act; they did not retire in disgust from the service in which they were engaged, but, each devoting his endeavours to the advancement of the religion, they parted from one another, and set forwards upon separate routes. The history goes along with one of them; and the second enterprise to him was attended with the same dangers and persecutions as both had met with in the first. The apostle's travels hitherto had been confined to Asia. He now crosses, for the first time, the Ægean sea, and carries with him, amongst others, the person whose accounts supply the information we are stating<sup>b</sup>. The first place in Greece at which he appears to have stopped, was Philippi in Macedonia. Here himself and one of his companions were cruelly whipped, cast into prison, and kept there under the most rigorous custody, being thrust, whilst yet smarting with their wounds, into the inner dungeon, and their feet made fast in the stocks<sup>c</sup>. Notwithstanding this unequivocal specimen of the usage which they had to look for in that country, they went forward in the execution of their errand. After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica; in which city, the house in which they lodged was assailed by a party of their enemies, in order to bring them out to the populace. And when, fortunately for their preservation, they were not found at home, the master of the house was dragged before the magistrate for admitting them within his doors<sup>d</sup>. Their reception at the next city was something better: but neither had they continued long before their turbulent adversaries, the Jews, excited against them such commotions amongst the inhabitants, as obliged the apostle to make his escape by a private journey to Athens<sup>e</sup>. The extremity of the progress was Corinth. His abode in this city, for some time, seems to have been without molestation. At length, however,

<sup>a</sup> Acts xv. 12—26.

<sup>b</sup> Acts xvi. 11.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xvi. 23, 24, 33.

<sup>d</sup> Acts xvii. 1—5.

<sup>e</sup> Acts xvii. 13.

the Jews found means to stir up an insurrection against him, and to bring him before the tribunal of the Roman president<sup>a</sup>. It was to the contempt which that magistrate entertained for the Jews and their controversies, of which he accounted Christianity to be one, that our apostle owed his deliverance<sup>b</sup>.

This indefatigable teacher, after leaving Corinth, returned by Ephesus into Syria; and again visited Jerusalem, and the society of Christians in that city, which, as hath been repeatedly observed, still continued the centre of the mission<sup>c</sup>. It suited not, however, with the activity of his zeal to remain long at Jerusalem. We find him going thence to Antioch, and, after some stay there, traversing once more the northern provinces of Asia Minor<sup>d</sup>. This progress ended at Ephesus: in which city, the apostle continued in the daily exercise of his ministry two years, and until his success, at length, excited the apprehensions of those who were interested in the support of the national worship. Their clamour produced a tumult, in which he had nearly lost his life<sup>e</sup>. Undismayed, however, by the dangers to which he saw himself exposed, he was driven from Ephesus only to renew his labours in Greece. After passing over Macedonia, he thence proceeded to his former station at Corinth<sup>f</sup>. When he had formed his design of returning by a direct course from Corinth into Syria, he was compelled by a conspiracy of the Jews, who were prepared to intercept him on his way, to trace back his steps through Macedonia to Philippi, and thence to take shipping into Asia. Along the coast of Asia, he pursued his voyage with all the expedition he could command, in order to reach Jerusalem against the feast of Pentecost<sup>g</sup>. His reception at Jerusalem was of a piece with the usage he had experienced from the Jews in other places. He had been only a few days in that city, when the populace, instigated by some of his old opponents in Asia, who attended this feast, seized him in the temple, forced him out of it, and were ready immediately to have destroyed him, had not the sudden presence of the Roman guard rescued him out of their hands<sup>h</sup>. The officer, however, who had thus seasonably interposed, acted from his care of the public peace, with the preservation of which he was charged, and not from any favour to the apostle, or indeed any disposition to exercise either justice or humanity towards him;

<sup>a</sup> Acts xviii. 12.<sup>b</sup> Acts xviii. 15.<sup>c</sup> Acts xviii. 22.<sup>d</sup> Acts xviii. 23.<sup>e</sup> Acts xix. 1, 9, 10.<sup>f</sup> Acts xx. 1, 2.<sup>g</sup> Acts xx. 16.<sup>h</sup> Acts xxi. 27—33.



for he had no sooner secured his person in the fortress, than he was proceeding to examine him by torture <sup>a</sup>.

From this time to the conclusion of the history, the apostle remains in public custody of the Roman government. After escaping assassination by a fortunate discovery of the plot, and delivering himself from the influence of his enemies by an appeal to the audience of the emperor<sup>b</sup>, he was sent, but not until he had suffered two years' imprisonment, to Rome<sup>c</sup>. He reached Italy after a tedious voyage, and after encountering in his passage the perils of a desperate shipwreck<sup>d</sup>. But although still a prisoner, and his fate still depending, neither the various and long continued sufferings which he had undergone, nor the danger of his present situation, deterred him from persisting in preaching the religion; for the historian closes the account by telling us, that, for two years, he received all that came unto him in his own hired house, where he was permitted to dwell with a soldier that guarded him, "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence."

Now the historian, from whom we have drawn this account, in the part of his narrative which relates to Saint Paul, is supported by the strongest corroborating testimony that a history can receive. We are in possession of letters written by Saint Paul himself upon the subject of his ministry, and either written during the period which the history comprises, or if written afterwards, reciting and referring to the transactions of that period. These letters, without borrowing from the history, or the history from them, unintentionally confirm the account which the history delivers, in a great variety of particulars. What belongs to our present purpose is the description exhibited of the apostle's sufferings: and the representation, given in the history, of the dangers and distresses which he underwent, not only agrees, in general, with the language which he himself uses whenever he speaks of his life or ministry, but is also, in many instances, attested by a specific correspondency of time, place, and order of events. If the historian put down in his narrative, that at Philippi the apostle "was beaten with many stripes, cast into prison, and there treated with rigour and indignity;"<sup>e</sup> we find him, in a letter<sup>f</sup> to a neighbouring church,

<sup>a</sup> Acts xxii. 24.<sup>b</sup> Acts xxv. 9, 11.<sup>c</sup> Acts xxiv. 27.<sup>d</sup> Acts xxvii.<sup>e</sup> Acts xvi. 23, 24.<sup>f</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 2.



reminding his converts, that, “after he had suffered before, and was shamefully entreated at Philippi, he was bold, nevertheless, to speak unto them (to whose city he next came) the Gospel of God.” If the history relate<sup>a</sup>, that, at Thessalonica, the house in which the apostle was lodged, when he first came to that place, was assaulted by the populace, and the master of it dragged before the magistrate for admitting such a guest within his doors; the apostle, in his letter to the Christians of Thessalonica, calls to their remembrance “how they had received the Gospel in much affliction.”<sup>b</sup> If the history deliver an account of an insurrection at Ephesus, which had nearly cost the apostle his life; we have the apostle himself, in a letter written a short time after his departure from that city, describing his despair, and returning thanks for his deliverance<sup>c</sup>. If the history inform us, that the apostle was expelled from Antioch in Pisidia, attempted to be stoned at Iconium, and actually stoned at Lystra; there is preserved a letter from him to a favourite convert, whom, as the same history tells us, he first met with in these parts; in which letter he appeals to that disciple’s knowledge “of the persecutions which befel him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra.”<sup>d</sup> If the history make the apostle, in his speech to the Ephesian elders, remind them, as one proof of the disinterestedness of his views, that, to their knowledge, he had supplied his own and the necessities of his companions by personal labour<sup>e</sup>; we find the same apostle, in a letter written during his residence at Ephesus, asserting of himself, “that even to that hour he laboured, working with his own hands.”<sup>f</sup>

These coincidences, together with many relative to other parts of the apostle’s history, and *all* drawn from independent sources, not only confirm the truth of the account, in the particular points as to which they are observed, but add much to the credit of the narrative in all its parts; and support the author’s profession of being a contemporary of the person whose history he writes, and, throughout a material portion of his narrative, a companion.

What the epistles of the apostles declare of the suffering state of Christianity, the writings which remain of their companions and immediate followers expressly confirm.

Clement, who is honourably mentioned by Saint Paul in his

<sup>a</sup> Acts xvii. 5.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Thess. i. 6.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xix. 2 Cor. i. 8—10.

<sup>d</sup> Acts xiii. 50; xiv. 5, 19. 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11.

<sup>e</sup> Acts xx. 34.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12.

epistle to the Philippians<sup>a</sup>, hath left us his attestation to this point, in the following words : “ Let us take (says he) the examples of our own age. Through zeal and envy, the most faithful and righteous pillars of the church have been persecuted even to the most grievous deaths. Let us set before our eyes *the holy apostles*. Peter, by unjust envy, underwent not one or two, but many sufferings ; till at last, being martyred, he went to the place of glory that was due unto him. For the same cause did Paul, in like manner, receive the reward of his patience. Seven times he was in bonds ; he was whipped, was stoned ; he preached both in the East and in the West, leaving behind him the glorious report of his faith ; and so having taught the whole world righteousness, and for that end travelled even unto the utmost bounds of the West, he at last suffered martyrdom by the command of the governors, and departed out of the world, and went unto his holy place, being become a most eminent pattern of patience unto all ages. To these holy apostles were joined a very great number of others, who, having through envy undergone, in like manner, many pains and torments, have left a glorious example to us. For this, not only men, but women, have been persecuted ; and, having suffered very grievous and cruel punishments, have finished the course of their faith with firmness.”<sup>b</sup>

Hermas, saluted by Saint Paul in his epistle to the Romans, in a piece very little connected with historical recitals, thus speaks : “ Such as have believed and suffered death for the name of Christ, and have endured with a ready mind, and have given up their lives with all their hearts.”<sup>c</sup>

Polycarp, the disciple of John, (though all that remains of his works be a very short epistle,) has not left this subject unnoticed. “ I exhort (says he) all of you, that ye obey the word of righteousness, and exercise all patience, which ye have seen set forth before your eyes, not only in the blessed Ignatius, and Lorimus, and Rufus, but in others among yourselves, and in *Paul himself and the rest of the apostles* ; being confident in this, that all these have not run in vain, but in faith and righteousness ; and are gone to the place that was due to them from the Lord, with whom also they suffered. For they loved not this

<sup>a</sup> Philipp. iv. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Clem. ad Cor. c. v. vi. Abp. Wake's Trans.

<sup>c</sup> Shepherd of Hermas, c. xxviii.

present world, but Him who died, and was raised again by God for us.”<sup>a</sup>

Ignatius, the contemporary of Polycarp, recognises the same topic, briefly indeed, but positively and precisely. “For this cause, (*i. e.* having felt and handled Christ’s body after his resurrection, and being convinced, as Ignatius expresses it, both by his flesh and spirit,) they (*i. e.* Peter, and those who were present with Peter at Christ’s appearance) despised death, and were found to be above it.”<sup>b</sup>

Would the reader know what a persecution in these days was, I would refer him to a circular letter, written by the church of Smyrna soon after the death of Polycarp, who, it will be remembered, had lived with Saint John; and which letter is entitled a relation of that bishop’s martyrdom. “The sufferings (say they) of all the other martyrs were blessed and generous; which they underwent according to the will of God. For so it becomes us, who are more religious than others, to ascribe the power and ordering of all things unto him. And indeed who can choose but admire the greatness of their minds, and that admirable patience and love of their Master, which then appeared in them? Who, when they were so flayed with whipping, that the frame and structure of their bodies were laid open to their very inward veins and arteries, nevertheless endured it. In like manner, those who were condemned to the beasts, and kept a long time in prison, underwent many cruel torments, being forced to lie upon sharp spikes laid under their bodies, and tormented with divers other sorts of punishments; that so, if it were possible, the tyrant, by the length of their sufferings, might have brought them to deny Christ.”<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Pol. ad Phil. c. ix.

<sup>b</sup> 19 Ep. Smyr. c. iii.

<sup>c</sup> Rel. Mor. Pol. c. ii.

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## CHAPTER V.

*There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

ON the history, of which the last chapter contains an abstract, there are a few observations which it may be proper to make, by way of applying its testimony to the particular propositions for which we contend.

I. Although our Scripture history leaves the general account of the apostles in an early part of the narrative, and proceeds with the separate account of one particular apostle, yet the information which it delivers so far extends to the rest, as it shows *the nature of the service*. When we see one apostle suffering persecution in the discharge of this commission, we shall not believe, without evidence, that the same office could, at the same time, be attended with ease and safety to others. And this fair and reasonable inference is confirmed by the direct attestation of the letters, to which we have so often referred. The writer of these letters not only alludes, in numerous passages, to his own sufferings, but speaks of the rest of the apostles as enduring like sufferings with himself. "I think that God hath set forth *us the apostles* last, as it were, appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men;—even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the earth, and as the offscouring of all things unto this day."<sup>a</sup> Add to which, that in the short account that is given of the other apostles in the former part of the history, and within the short period which that account comprises, we find, first, two of them seized, imprisoned, brought before the Sanhedrim, and threatened with further punishment<sup>b</sup>; then, the whole number imprisoned and beaten<sup>c</sup>; soon afterwards, one of their ad-

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 9, et seq.<sup>b</sup> Acts iv. 3, 21.<sup>c</sup> Acts v. 18. 40.



herents stoned to death, and so hot a persecution raised against the sect, as to drive most of them out of the place; a short time only succeeding, before one of the twelve was beheaded, and another sentenced to the same fate; and all this passing in the single city of Jerusalem, and within ten years after the Founder's death, and the commencement of the institution.

II. We take no credit at present for the miraculous part of the narrative, nor do we insist upon the correctness of single passages of it. If the whole story be not a novel, a romance; the whole action a dream; if Peter, and James, and Paul, and the rest of the apostles mentioned in the account, be not all imaginary persons; if their letters be not all forgeries, and, what is more, forgeries of names and characters which never existed; then is there evidence in our hands sufficient to support the only fact we contend for, (and which, I repeat again, is, in itself, highly probable,) that the original followers of Jesus Christ exerted great endeavours to propagate his religion, and underwent great labours, dangers, and sufferings, in consequence of their undertaking.

III. The general reality of the apostolic history is strongly confirmed by the consideration, that it, in truth, does no more than assign adequate causes for effects which certainly were produced, and describe consequences naturally resulting from situations which certainly existed. The *effects* were certainly there, of which this history sets forth the cause, and origin, and progress. It is acknowledged on all hands, because it is recorded by other testimony than that of the Christians themselves, that the religion began to prevail at that time, and in that country. It is very difficult to conceive how it could begin, or prevail at all, without the exertions of the Founder and his followers, in propagating the new persuasion. The history now in our hands describes these exertions, the persons employed, the means and endeavours made use of, and the labours undertaken in the prosecution of this purpose. Again, the treatment which the history represents the first propagators of the religion to have experienced was no other than what naturally resulted from the situation in which they were confessedly placed. It is admitted that the religion was adverse, in a great degree, to the reigning opinions, and to the hopes and wishes of the nation to which it was first introduced; and that it overthrew, so far as it was received, the established theology and worship of every other country. We cannot feel much reluctance in believing

that, when the messengers of such a system went about not only publishing their opinions, but collecting proselytes, and forming regular societies of proselytes, they should meet with opposition in their attempts, or that this opposition should sometimes proceed to fatal extremities. Our history details examples of this opposition, and of the sufferings and dangers which the emissaries of the religion underwent, perfectly agreeable to what might reasonably be expected, from the nature of their undertaking, compared with the character of the age and country in which it was carried on.

IV. The records before us supply evidence of what formed another member of our general proposition, and what, as hath already been observed, is highly probable, and almost a necessary consequence of their new profession, viz. that, together with activity and courage in propagating the religion, the primitive followers of Jesus assumed, upon their conversion, a new and peculiar course of private life. Immediately after their Master was withdrawn from them, we hear of their "continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication"<sup>a</sup>; of their "continuing daily with one accord in the temple"<sup>b</sup>; of "many being gathered together praying"<sup>c</sup>. We know what strict injunctions were laid upon the converts by their teachers. Wherever they came, the first word of their preaching was, "Repent!" We know that these injunctions obliged them to refrain from many species of licentiousness, which were not, at that time, reputed criminal. We know the rules of purity, and the maxims of benevolence, which Christians read in their books; concerning which rules, it is enough to observe, that, if they were, I will not say completely obeyed, but in any degree regarded, they would produce a system of conduct, and, what is more difficult to preserve, a disposition of mind, and a regulation of affections, different from any thing to which they had hitherto been accustomed, and different from what they would see in others. The change and distinction of manners, which resulted from their new character, is perpetually referred to in the letters of their teachers. "And you hath he quickened, who *were* dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in *times past* ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh,

<sup>a</sup> Acts i. 14.<sup>b</sup> Acts ii. 46.<sup>c</sup> Acts xii. 12.



and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”<sup>a</sup>—“For the *time past of our life* may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries; *wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot.*”<sup>b</sup> Saint Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, after enumerating, as his manner was, a catalogue of vicious characters, adds, “Such *were* some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified.”<sup>c</sup> In like manner, and alluding to the same change of practices and sentiments, he asks the Roman Christians, “what fruit they had in those things, whereof they are *now* ashamed?”<sup>d</sup> The phrases which the same writer employs to describe the moral condition of Christians, compared with their condition before they became Christians, such as “newness of life,” being “freed from sin,” being “dead to sin;” “the destruction of the body of sin, that, *for the future*, they should not serve sin;” “children of light and of the day,” as opposed to “children of darkness and of the night;” “not sleeping as others;” imply, at least, a new system of obligation, and, probably, a new series of conduct, commencing with their conversion.

The testimony which Pliny bears to the behaviour of the new sect in his time, and which testimony comes not more than fifty years after that of Saint Paul, is very applicable to the subject under consideration. The character which this writer gives of the Christians of that age, and which was drawn from a pretty accurate inquiry, because he considered their moral principles as the point in which the magistrate was interested, is as follows:—He tells the emperor, “that some of those who had relinquished the society, or who, to save themselves, pretended that they had relinquished it, affirmed that they were wont to meet together, on a stated day, before it was light, and sang among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as a god; and to bind themselves by an oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, but that they would not be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery; that they would never falsify their word, or deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it.” This proves that a morality, more pure and strict than was ordinary, prevailed at that time in Christian societies. And to me it appears, that we are authorized to carry this testimony

<sup>a</sup> Eph. ii. 1–3. See also Tit. iii. 3.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 11.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. vi. 21.

back to the age of the apostles ; because it is not probable that the immediate hearers and disciples of Christ were more relaxed than their successors in Pliny's time, or the missionaries of the religion, than those whom they taught.

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## CHAPTER VI.

*There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts ; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

WHEN we consider, first, the prevalency of the religion at this hour ; secondly, the only credible account which can be given of its origin, viz. the activity of the Founder and his associates ; thirdly, the opposition which that activity must naturally have excited ; fourthly, the fate of the Founder of the religion, attested by heathen writers as well as our own ; fifthly, the testimony of the same writers to the sufferings of Christians, either contemporary with, or immediately succeeding, the original settlers of the institution ; sixthly, predictions of the sufferings of his followers ascribed to the Founder of the religion, which ascription alone proves, either that such predictions were delivered and fulfilled, or that the writers of Christ's life were induced by the event to attribute such predictions to him ; seventhly, letters now in our possession, written by some of the principal agents in the transaction, referring expressly to extreme labours, dangers, and sufferings, sustained by themselves and their companions ; lastly, a history purporting to be written by a fellow-traveller of one of the new teachers, and, by its unsophisticated correspondency with letters of that person still extant, proving itself to be written by some one well acquainted with the subject of the narrative, which history contains accounts of travels, persecutions, and martyrdoms, answering to what the former reasons lead us to expect : when we lay together these considerations, which, taken separately, are, I think, correctly, such as I have stated them in the preceding chapters, there cannot much doubt remain upon our minds, but that a number of per-



sons at that time appeared in the world, publicly advancing an extraordinary story, and, for the sake of propagating the belief of that story, voluntarily incurring great personal dangers, traversing seas and kingdoms, exerting great industry, and sustaining great extremities of ill usage and persecution. It is also proved, that the same persons, in consequence of their persuasion, or pretended persuasion, of the truth of what they asserted, entered upon a course of life in many respects new and singular.

From the clear and acknowledged parts of the case, I think it to be likewise in the highest degree probable, that the story, for which these persons voluntarily exposed themselves to the fatigues and hardships which they endured, was a *miraculous* story; I mean, that they pretended to miraculous evidence of some kind or other. They had nothing else to stand upon. The designation of the person, that is to say, that Jesus of Nazareth, rather than any other person, was the Messiah, and as such the subject of their ministry, could only be founded upon supernatural tokens attributed to him. Here were no victories, no conquests, no revolutions, no surprising elevation of fortune, no achievements of valour, of strength, or of policy, to appeal to; no discoveries in any art or science, no great efforts of genius or learning to produce. A Galilean peasant was announced to the world as a divine lawgiver. A young man of mean condition, of a private and simple life, and who had wrought no deliverance for the Jewish nation, was declared to be their Messiah. This, without ascribing to him at the same time some proofs of his mission, (and what other but supernatural proofs could there be?) was too absurd a claim to be either imagined, or attempted, or credited. In whatever degree, or in whatever part, the religion was *argumentative*, when it came to the question, "Is the carpenter's son of Nazareth the person whom we are to receive and obey?" there was nothing but the miracles attributed to him, by which his pretensions could be maintained for a moment. Every controversy and every question must presuppose these: for, however such controversies, when they did arise, might, and naturally would, be discussed upon their own grounds of argumentation, without citing the miraculous evidence which had been asserted to attend the Founder of the religion, (which would have been to enter upon another, and a more general question,) yet we are to bear in mind, that without previously supposing the existence or the

pretence of such evidence, there could have been no place for the discussion of the argument at all. Thus, for example, whether the prophecies, which the Jews interpreted to belong to the Messiah, were, or were not applicable to the history of Jesus of Nazareth, was a natural subject of debate in those times; and the debate would proceed, without recurring at every turn to his miracles, because it set out with supposing these; inasmuch as without miraculous marks and tokens, (real or pretended,) or without some such great change effected by his means in the public condition of the country, as might have satisfied the then received interpretation of these prophecies, I do not see how the question could ever have been entertained. Apolos, we read, "mightily convinced the Jews, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ"<sup>a</sup>; but unless Jesus had exhibited some distinction of his person, some proof of supernatural power, the argument from the old Scriptures could have had no place. It had nothing to attach upon. A young man calling himself the Son of God, gathering a crowd about him, and delivering to them lectures of morality, could not have excited so much as a doubt among the Jews, whether he was the object in whom a long series of ancient prophecies terminated, from the completion of which they had formed such magnificent expectations, and expectations of a nature so opposite to what appeared; I mean, no such doubt could exist when they had the whole case before them, when they saw him put to death for his officiousness, and when by his death the evidence concerning him was closed. Again, the *effect* of the Messiah's coming, supposing Jesus to have been he, upon Jews, upon Gentiles, upon their relation to each other, upon their acceptance with God, upon their duties and their expectations; his nature, authority, office, and agency; were likely to become subjects of much consideration with the early votaries of the religion, and to occupy their attention and writings. I should not however expect, that in these disquisitions, whether preserved in the form of letters, speeches, or set treatises, frequent or very direct mention of his miracles would occur. Still, miraculous evidence lay at the bottom of the argument. In the *primary* question, miraculous pretensions, and miraculous pretensions alone, were what they had to rely upon.

That the original story was miraculous, is very fairly also inferred from the miraculous powers which were laid claim to by

<sup>a</sup> Acts xviii. 28.

the Christians of succeeding ages. If the accounts of these miracles be true, it was a continuation of the same powers ; if they be false, it was an *imitation*, I will not say, of what had been wrought, but of what had been reported to have been wrought, by those who preceded them. That imitation should follow reality, fiction should be grafted upon truth ; that, if miracles were performed at first, miracles should be pretended afterwards ; agrees so well with the ordinary course of human affairs, that we can have no great difficulty in believing it. The contrary supposition is very improbable, namely, that miracles should be pretended to by the followers of the apostles and first emissaries of the religion, when none were pretended to, either in their own persons or that of their Master, by these apostles and emissaries themselves.

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## CHAPTER VII.

*There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts ; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

It being then once proved, that the first propagators of the Christian institution did exert activity, and subject themselves to great dangers and sufferings, in consequence and for the sake of an extraordinary, and, I think, we may say, of a miraculous story of some kind or other ; the next great question is, Whether the account, which our Scriptures contain, be that story ; that which these men delivered, and for which they acted and suffered as they did ? This question is, in effect, no other than whether the story which Christians have *now*, be the story which Christians had *then* ? And of this the following proofs may be deduced from general considerations, and from considerations prior to any inquiry into the particular reasons and testimonies by which the authority of our histories is supported.

In the first place, there exists no trace or vestige of any other story. It is not, like the death of Cyrus the Great, a competition between opposite accounts, or between the credit of different historians. There is not a document, or scrap of account,



either contemporary with the commencement of Christianity, or extant within many ages after that commencement, which assigns a history substantially different from ours. The remote, brief, and incidental notices of the affair, which are found in heathen writers, so far as they do go, go along with us. They bear testimony to these facts:—that the institution originated from Jesus; that the Founder was put to death, as a malefactor, at Jerusalem, by the authority of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate; that the religion nevertheless spread in that city, and throughout Judea; and that it was propagated thence to distant countries; that the converts were numerous; that they suffered great hardships and injuries for their profession; and that all this took place in the age of the world which our books have assigned. They go on further, to describe the *manners* of Christians, in terms perfectly conformable to the accounts extant in our books; that they were wont to assemble on a certain day; that they sang hymns to Christ as to a God; that they bound themselves by an oath not to commit any crime, but to abstain from theft and adultery, to adhere strictly to their promises, and not to deny money deposited in their hands<sup>a</sup>; that they worshipped him who was crucified in Palestine; that this their first lawgiver had taught them that they were all brethren; that they had a great contempt for the things of this world, and looked upon them as common; that they flew to one another's relief; that they cherished strong hopes of immortality; that they despised death, and surrendered themselves to sufferings<sup>b</sup>. This is the account of writers who viewed the subject at a great distance; who were uninformed and uninterested about it. It bears the characters of such an account upon the face of it, because it describes effects, namely, the appearance in the world of a new religion, and the conversion of great multitudes to it, without descending, in the smallest degree, to

<sup>a</sup> See Pliny's Letter.—Bonnet, in his lively way of expressing himself, says,—“Comparing Pliny's Letter with the account of the Acts, it seems to me that I had not taken up another author, but that I was still reading the historian of that extraordinary society.” This is strong; but there is undoubtedly an affinity, and all the affinity that could be expected.

<sup>b</sup> “It is incredible what expedition they use when any of their friends are known to be in trouble. In a word they spare nothing upon such an occasion;—for these miserable men have no doubt they shall be immortal and live for ever; therefore they condemn death, and many surrender themselves to sufferings. Moreover, their first lawgiver has taught them that they are all brethren, when once they have turned and renounced the gods of the Greeks, and worship this Master of theirs who was crucified, and engage to live according to his laws. They have also a sovereign contempt for all the things of this world, and look upon them as common.” Lucian. de Morte Peregrini, t. i. p. 565. ed. Græv.



the detail of the transaction upon which it was founded, the interior of the institution, the evidence or arguments offered by those who drew over others to it. Yet still here is no contradiction of our story ; no other or different story set up against it : but so far a confirmation of it, as that, in the general points on which the heathen account touches, it agrees with that which we find in our own books.

The same may be observed of the very few Jewish writers, of that and the adjoining period, which have come down to us. Whatever they omit, or whatever difficulties we may find in explaining the omission, they advance no other history of the transaction than that which we acknowledge. Josephus, who wrote his *Antiquities*, or *History of the Jews*, about sixty years after the commencement of Christianity, in a passage generally admitted as genuine, makes mention of John under the name of John the Baptist ; that he was a preacher of virtue ; that he baptized his proselytes ; that he was well received by the people ; that he was imprisoned and put to death by Herod ; and that Herod lived in a criminal cohabitation with Herodias, his brother's wife<sup>a</sup>. In another passage allowed by many, although not without considerable question being moved about it, we hear of "James, the brother of him who was called Jesus, and of his being put to death."<sup>b</sup> In a third passage, extant in every copy that remains of Josephus's *History*, but the authenticity of which has nevertheless been long disputed, we have an explicit testimony to the substance of our history in these words :—"At that time lived Jesus, a wise man, if he may be called a man, for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles. This was the Christ ; and when Pilate, at the instigation of the chief men among us, had condemned him to the cross, they who before had conceived an affection for him, did not cease to adhere to him ; for, on the third day, he appeared to them alive again, the divine prophets having foretold these and many wonderful things concerning him. And the sect of the Christians, so called from him, subsists to this time."<sup>c</sup> Whatever become of the controversy concerning the genuineness of this passage ; whether Josephus go the whole length of our history, which, if the passage be sincere, he does ; or whether he proceed only a very

<sup>a</sup> Antiq. l. xviii. cap. v. sect. 1, 2.

<sup>b</sup> Antiq. l. xx. cap. ix. sect. 1.

<sup>c</sup> Antiq. l. xviii. cap. iii. sect. 3.

little way with us, which, if the passage be rejected, we confess to be the case; still what we asserted is true, that he gives no other or different history of the subject from ours, no other or different account of the origin of the institution. And I think also that it may with great reason be contended, either that the passage is genuine, or that the silence of Josephus was *designed*. For, although we should lay aside the authority of our own books entirely, yet when Tacitus, who wrote not twenty, perhaps not ten, years after Josephus, in his account of a period in which Josephus was nearly thirty years of age, tells us, that a vast multitude of Christians were condemned at Rome; that they derived their denomination from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death, as a criminal, by the procurator, Pontius Pilate; that the superstition had spread not only over Judea, the source of the evil, but had reached Rome also:—when Suetonius, an historian contemporary with Tacitus, relates that, in the time of Claudius, the Jews were making disturbances at Rome, Christus being their leader: and that, during the reign of Nero, the Christians were punished; under both which emperors, Josephus lived: when Pliny, who wrote his celebrated epistle not more than thirty years after the publication of Josephus's history, found the Christians in such numbers in the province of Bithynia, as to draw from him a complaint that the contagion had seized cities, towns, and villages, and had so seized them as to produce a general desertion of the public rites; and when, as has already been observed, there is no reason for imagining that the Christians were more numerous in Bithynia than in many other parts of the Roman empire; it cannot, I should suppose, after this, be believed, that the religion, and the transaction upon which it was founded, were too obscure to engage the attention of Josephus, or to obtain a place in his history. Perhaps he did not know how to represent the business, and disposed of his difficulties by passing it over in silence. Eusebius wrote the life of Constantine, yet omits entirely the most remarkable circumstance in that life, the death of his son Crispus; undoubtedly for the reason here given. The reserve of Josephus upon the subject of Christianity appears also in his passing over the banishment of the Jews by Claudius, which Suetonius, we have seen, has recorded with an express reference to Christ. This is at least as remarkable as his silence about the infants of Bethlehem<sup>a</sup>. Be, however, the

<sup>a</sup> Michaelis has computed, and, as it should seem, fairly enough, that probably



fact, or the cause of the omission in Josephus<sup>a</sup>, what it may, no other or different history on the subject has been given by him, or is pretended to have been given.

But further; the whole series of Christian writers, from the first age of the institution down to the present, in their discussions, apologies, arguments, and controversies, proceed upon the general story which our Scriptures contain, and upon no other. The main facts, the principal agents, are alike in all. This argument will appear to be of great force, when it is known that we are able to trace back the series of writers to a contact with the historical books of the New Testament, and to the age of the first emissaries of the religion, and to deduce it, by an unbroken continuation, from that end of the train to the present.

The remaining letters of the apostles, (and what more original than *their* letters can we have?) though written without the remotest design of transmitting the history of Christ, or of Christianity, to future ages, or even of making it known to their contemporaries, incidentally disclose to us the following circumstances:—Christ's descent and family; his innocence; the meekness and gentleness of his character; (a recognition which goes to the whole Gospel history;) his exalted nature; his circumcision; his transfiguration; his life of opposition and suffering; his patience and resignation; the appointment of the eucharist, and the manner of it; his agony; his confession before Pontius Pilate; his stripes, crucifixion, and burial; his resurrection; his appearance after it, first to Peter, then to the rest of the apostles; his ascension into heaven; and his designation to be the future judge of mankind;—the stated residence of the apostles at Jerusalem; the working of miracles by the first preachers of the Gospel, who were also the hearers of Christ<sup>b</sup>;—the successful propagation of the religion; the perse-

not more than twenty children perished by this cruel precaution. Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament, translated by Marsh; vol. i. c. ii. sect. 11.

<sup>a</sup> There is no notice taken of Christianity in the Mishna, a collection of Jewish traditions compiled about the year 180; although it contains a Tract "*De cultu peregrino*," of strange or idolatrous worship; yet it cannot be disputed but that Christianity was perfectly well known in the world at this time. There is extremely little notice of the subject in the Jerusalem Talmud, compiled about the year 300, and not much more in the Babylonish Talmud, of the year 500; although both these works are of a religious nature, and although, when the first was compiled, Christianity was on the point of becoming the religion of the state, and, when the latter was published, had been so for 200 years.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. ii. 3. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us *by them that*



cution of its followers; the miraculous conversion of Paul; miracles wrought by himself, and alleged in his controversies with his adversaries, and in letters to the persons amongst whom they were wrought; finally, that *MIRACLES were the signs of an apostle*<sup>a</sup>.

In an epistle, bearing the name of Barnabas, the companion of Paul, probably genuine, certainly belonging to that age, we have the sufferings of Christ, his choice of apostles and their number, his passion, the scarlet robe, the vinegar and gall, the mocking and piercing, the casting lots for his coat<sup>b</sup>, his resurrection on the eighth, (*i. e.* the first day of the week<sup>c</sup>), and the commemorative distinction of that day, his manifestation after his resurrection, and, lastly, his ascension. We have also his miracles generally but positively referred to in the following words:—"Finally, teaching the people of Israel, and *doing many wonders and signs among them*, he preached to them, and showed the exceeding great love which he bare towards them."<sup>d</sup>

In an epistle of Clement, a hearer of St. Paul, although written for a purpose remotely connected with the Christian history, we have the resurrection of Christ, and the subsequent mission of the apostles, recorded in these satisfactory terms: "The apostles have preached to us from our Lord Jesus Christ from God:—For, having received their command, and being *thoroughly assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ*, they went abroad, publishing that the kingdom of God was at hand."<sup>e</sup> We find noticed also, the humility, yet the power of Christ<sup>f</sup>, his descent from Abraham, his crucifixion. We have Peter and Paul represented as faithful and righteous pillars of the church; the numerous sufferings of Peter; the bonds, stripes, and stoning of Paul, and more particularly his extensive and unwearied travels.

*heard him*, God also bearing them witness, both *with signs and wonders*, and with *divers miracles*, and gifts of the Holy Ghost?" I allege this epistle without hesitation; for, whatever doubts may have been raised about its author, there can be none concerning the age in which it was written. No epistle in the collection carries about it more indubitable marks of antiquity than this does. It speaks, for instance, throughout, of the temple as then standing, and of the worship of the temple as then subsisting—Heb. viii. 4: "For, if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing there *are* priests that offer according to the law."—Again, Heb. xiii. 10: "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which *serve* the tabernacle."

<sup>a</sup> "Truly *the signs of an apostle* were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." 2 Cor. xii. 12.

<sup>b</sup> Ep. Bar. c. vii.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid. c. vi.

<sup>d</sup> Ibid. c. v.

<sup>e</sup> Ep. Clem. Rom. c. xlii.

<sup>f</sup> Ep. Clem. Rom. c. xvi.

In an epistle of Polycarp, a disciple of St. John, though only a brief hortatory letter, we have the humility, patience, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, together with the apostolic character of St. Paul, distinctly recognised<sup>a</sup>. Of this same father we are also assured by Irenæus, that he (Irenæus) had heard him relate, “what he had received from eye-witnesses concerning the Lord, both *concerning his miracles and his doctrine.*”<sup>b</sup>

In the remaining works of Ignatius, the contemporary of Polycarp, larger than those of Polycarp, (yet, like those of Polycarp, treating of subjects in nowise leading to any recital of the Christian history,) the occasional allusions are proportionably more numerous. The descent of Christ from David, his mother Mary, his miraculous conception, the star at his birth, his baptism by John, the reason assigned for it, his appeal to the prophets, the ointment poured on his head, his sufferings under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch, his resurrection, the Lord’s day called and kept in commemoration of it, and the eucharist, in both its parts,—are unequivocally referred to. Upon the resurrection, this writer is even circumstantial. He mentions the apostles’ eating and drinking with Christ after he had risen, their feeling and their handling him; from which last circumstance Ignatius raises this just reflection;—“They believed, being convinced both by his flesh and spirit; for this cause, they despised death, and were found to be above it.”<sup>c</sup>

Quadratus, of the same age with Ignatius, has left us the following noble testimony:—“The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real; both those that were healed, and those that were raised from the dead; who were seen not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards; not only whilst he dwelled on this earth, but also after his departure, and for a good while after it, insomuch that some of them have reached to our times.”<sup>d</sup>

Justin Martyr came little more than thirty years after Quadratus. From Justin’s works, which are still extant, might be collected a tolerably complete account of Christ’s life, in all points agreeing with that which is delivered in our Scriptures; taken indeed, in a great measure, from those Scriptures, but still proving that this account, and no other, was the account known

<sup>a</sup> Pol. Ep. ad Phil. c. v. viii. ii. iii.

<sup>c</sup> Ad Smyr. c. iii.

<sup>b</sup> Ir. ad Flor. ap. Euseb. l. v. c. 20.

<sup>d</sup> Ap. Euseb. H. E. lib. 4. c. 3.

and extant in that age. The miracles in particular, which form the part of Christ's history most material to be traced, stand fully and distinctly recognised in the following passage :—"He healed those who had been blind, and deaf, and lame from their birth ; causing, by his word, one to leap, another to hear, and a third to see : and, by raising the dead, and making them to live, he induced, by his works, the men of that age to know him." <sup>a</sup>

It is unnecessary to carry these citations lower, because the history, after this time, occurs in ancient Christian writings as familiarly as it is wont to do in modern sermons ;—occurs always the same in substance, and always that which our evangelists represent.

This is not only true of those writings of Christians, which are genuine, and of acknowledged authority ; but it is, in a great measure, true of *all* their ancient writings which remain ; although some of these may have been erroneously ascribed to authors to whom they did not belong, or may contain false accounts, or may appear to be undeserving of credit, or never indeed to have obtained any. Whatever fables they have mixed with the narrative, they preserve the material parts, the leading facts, as we have them ; and, so far as they do this, although they be evidence of nothing else, they are evidence that these points were *fixed*, were received and acknowledged by all Christians in the ages in which the books were written. At least, it may be asserted, that, in the places where we were most likely to meet with such things, if such things had existed, no reliques appear of any story substantially different from the present, as the cause, or as the pretence, of the institution.

Now that the original story, the story delivered by the first preachers of the institution, should have died away so entirely as to have left no record or memorial of its existence, although so many records and memorials of the time and transaction remain ; and that another story should have stepped into its place, and gained exclusive possession of the belief of all who professed themselves disciples of the institution, is beyond any example of the corruption of even oral tradition, and still less consistent with the experience of written history : and this improbability, which is very great, is rendered still greater by the reflection, that no such *change* as the oblivion of one story, and the substitution of another, took place in any future period of the Christian æra. Christianity hath travelled through dark

<sup>a</sup> Just. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 288. ed. Thirl.



and turbulent ages ; nevertheless it came out of the cloud and the storm, such, in substance, as it entered in. Many additions were made to the primitive history, and these entitled to different degrees of credit ; many doctrinal errors also were from time to time grafted into the public creed ; but still the original story remained, and remained the same. In all its principal parts, it has been fixed from the beginning.

Thirdly : The religious rites and usages that prevailed amongst the early disciples of Christianity were such as belonged to, and sprung out of, the narrative now in our hands ; which accordancy shows, that it was the narrative upon which these persons acted, and which they had received from their teachers. Our account makes the Founder of the religion direct that his disciples should be baptized : we know that the first Christians were baptized. Our account makes him direct that they should hold religious assemblies : we find that they did hold religious assemblies. Our accounts make the apostles assemble upon a stated day of the week : we find, and that from information perfectly independent of our accounts, that the Christians of the first century did observe stated days of assembling. Our histories record the institution of the rite which we call the Lord's Supper, and a command to repeat it in perpetual succession : we find, amongst the early Christians, the celebration of this rite universal. And, indeed, we find concurring in all the above-mentioned observances, Christian societies of many different nations and languages, removed from one another by a great distance of place and dissimilitude of situation. It is also extremely material to remark, that there is no room for insinuating that our books were fabricated with a studious accommodation to the usages which obtained at the time they were written ; that the authors of the books found the usages established, and framed the story to account for their original. The Scripture accounts, especially of the Lord's Supper, are too short and cursory, not to say too obscure, and, in this view, deficient, to allow a place for any such suspicion<sup>a</sup>.

Amongst the proofs of the truth of our proposition, viz. that the story, which we have *now*, is, in substance, the story which the Christians had *then*, or, in other words, that the accounts in our Gospels are, as to their principal parts, at least, the ac-

<sup>a</sup> The reader who is conversant in these researches, by comparing the short Scripture accounts of the Christian rites above-mentioned, with the minute and circumstantial directions contained in the pretended apostolical constitutions, will see the force of this observation ; the difference between truth and forgery.

counts which the apostles and original teachers of the religion delivered, one arises from observing, that it appears by the Gospels themselves, that the story was public at the time; that the Christian community was already in possession of the substance and principal parts of the narrative. — The Gospels were not the original cause of the Christian history being believed, but were themselves among the consequences of that belief. This is expressly affirmed by Saint Luke, in his brief, but, as I think, very important and instructive preface:—"Forasmuch (says the evangelist) as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things *which are most surely believed amongst us, even as they delivered them unto us, which, from the beginning, were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word*; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things *wherein thou hast been instructed*."— This short introduction testifies, that the substance of the history which the evangelist was about to write was already believed by Christians; that it was believed upon the declarations of eye-witnesses and ministers of the word; that it formed the account of their religion in which Christians were instructed; that the office which the historian proposed to himself was to trace each particular to its origin, and to fix the certainty of many things which the reader had before heard of. In Saint John's Gospel, the same point appears hence, that there are some principal facts, to which the historian refers, but which he does not relate. A remarkable instance of this kind is the *ascension*, which is not mentioned by Saint John in its place, at the conclusion of his history; but which is plainly referred to in the following words of the sixth chapter<sup>a</sup>; "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" And still more positively in the words which Christ, according to our evangelist, spoke to Mary after his resurrection, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go unto my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God."<sup>b</sup> This can only be accounted for by the supposition that Saint John wrote under a sense of the notoriety of Christ's ascension, amongst those by whom his book was likely to be read. The same account must also be given of Saint Matthew's omission of the same im-

<sup>a</sup> Also John iii. 31; and xvi. 28.

<sup>b</sup> John x. 17.

portant fact. The thing was very well known, and it did not occur to the historian that it was necessary to add any particulars concerning it. It agrees also with this solution, and with no other, that neither Matthew, nor John, disposes of the person of our Lord in any manner whatever. Other intimations in St. John's Gospel of the then general notoriety of the story are the following: His manner of introducing his narrative (ch. i. ver. 15.)—"John bare witness of him, and cried, saying"—evidently presupposes that his readers knew who John was. His rapid parenthetical reference to John's imprisonment, "for John was not yet cast into prison,"<sup>a</sup> could only come from a writer whose mind was in the habit of considering John's imprisonment as perfectly notorious. The description of Andrew by the addition "Simon Peter's brother,"<sup>b</sup> takes it for granted, that Simon Peter was well known. His name had not been mentioned before. The evangelist's noticing<sup>c</sup> the prevailing misconception of a discourse, which Christ held with the beloved disciple, proves that the characters and the discourse were already public. And the observation which these instances afford is of equal validity for the purpose of the present argument, whoever were the authors of the histories.

These *four* circumstances;—first, the recognition of the account in its principal parts, by a series of succeeding writers; secondly, the total absence of any account of the origin of the religion substantially different from ours; thirdly, the early and extensive prevalence of rites and institutions, which result from our account; fourthly, our account bearing, in its construction, proof that it is an account of facts, which were known and believed at the time;—are sufficient, I conceive, to support an assurance, that the story which we have now is, in general, the story which Christians had at the beginning. I say *in general*; by which term I mean, that it is the same in its texture, and in its principal facts. For instance, I make no doubt, for the reasons above stated, but that the resurrection of the Founder of the religion was always a part of the Christian story. Nor can a doubt of this remain upon the mind of any one who reflects that the resurrection is, in some form or other, asserted, referred to, or assumed, in every Christian writing, of every description, which hath come down to us.

<sup>a</sup> John iii. 24.<sup>b</sup> Ibid. i. 40.<sup>c</sup> Ibid. xxi. 24.



And if our evidence stopped here, we should have a strong case to offer : for we should have to allege, that, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, a certain number of persons set about an attempt of establishing a new religion in the world : in the prosecution of which purpose, they voluntarily encountered great dangers, undertook great labours, sustained great sufferings, all for a miraculous story, which they published wherever they came ; and that the resurrection of a dead man, whom, during his life, they had followed and accompanied, was a constant part of this story. I know nothing in the above statement which can, with any appearance of reason, be disputed ; and I know nothing, in the history of the human species, similar to it.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

*There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts ; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

THAT the story which we have now is, in the main, the story which the apostles published, is, I think, nearly certain, from the considerations which have been proposed. But whether, when we come to the particulars, and the detail of the narrative, the historical books of the New Testament be deserving of credit as histories, so that a fact ought to be accounted true, because it is found in them ; or whether they are entitled to be considered as representing the accounts which, true or false, the apostles published ;—whether their authority, in either of these views, can be trusted to, is a point which necessarily depends upon what we know of the books, and of their authors.

Now, in treating of this part of our argument, the first and most material observation upon the subject is, that such was the situation of the authors to whom the four Gospels are ascribed, that, if any one of the four be genuine, it is sufficient for our purpose. The received author of the first was an original apostle and emissary of the religion. The received author of the second was an inhabitant of Jerusalem at the time, to

whose house the apostles were wont to resort, and himself an attendant upon one of the most eminent of that number. The received author of the third was a stated companion and fellow-traveller of the most active of all the teachers of the religion, and in the course of his travels frequently in the society of the original apostles. The received author of the fourth, as well as of the first, was one of these apostles. No stronger evidence of the truth of a history can arise from the situation of the historian, than what is here offered. The authors of all the histories lived at the time and upon the spot. The authors of two of the histories were present at many of the scenes which they describe; eye-witnesses of the facts, ear-witnesses of the discourses; writing from personal knowledge and recollection; and, what strengthens their testimony, writing upon a subject in which their minds were deeply engaged, and in which, as they must have been very frequently repeating the accounts to others, the passages of the history would be kept continually alive in their memory. Whoever reads the Gospels, (and they ought to be read for this particular purpose,) will find in them not merely a general affirmation of miraculous powers, but detailed circumstantial accounts of miracles, with specifications of time, place, and persons; and these accounts many and various. In the Gospels, therefore, which bear the names of Matthew and John, these narratives, if they really proceeded from these men, must either be true, as far as the fidelity of human recollection is usually to be depended upon, that is, must be true in substance, and in their principal parts, (which is sufficient for the purpose of proving a supernatural agency,) or they must be wilful and meditated falsehoods. Yet the writers who fabricated and uttered these falsehoods, if they be such, are of the number of those who, unless the whole contexture of the Christian story be a dream, sacrificed their ease and safety in the cause, and for a purpose the most inconsistent that is possible with dishonest intentions. They were villains for no end but to teach honesty, and martyrs without the least prospect of honour or advantage.

The Gospels which bear the names of Mark and Luke, although not the narratives of eye-witnesses, are, if genuine, removed from that only by one degree. They are the narratives of contemporary writers, or writers themselves mixing with the business; one of the two probably living in the place which was the principal scene of action; both living in habits of so-

ciety and correspondence with those who had been present at the transactions which they relate. The latter of them accordingly tells us, (and with apparent sincerity, because he tells it without pretending to personal knowledge, and without claiming for his work greater authority than belonged to it,) that the things which were believed amongst Christians came from those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word; that he had traced accounts up to their source; and that he was prepared to instruct his reader in the certainty of the things which he related <sup>a</sup>. Very few histories lie so close to their facts; very few historians are so nearly connected with the subject of their narrative, or possess such means of authentic information, as these.

The situation of the writers applies to the *truth* of the facts which they record. But at present we use their testimony to a point somewhat short of this, namely, that the facts recorded in the Gospels, whether true or false, are the facts, and the sort of facts, which the original preachers of the religion alleged. Strictly speaking, I am concerned only to show, that what the Gospels contain is the same as what the apostles preached. Now, how stands the proof of this point? A set of men went about the world, publishing a story composed of miraculous accounts, (for miraculous from the very nature and exigency of the case they must have been,) and upon the strength of these accounts, called upon mankind to quit the religions in which they had been educated, and to take up, thenceforth, a new system of opinions, and new rules of action. What is more in attestation of these accounts, that is, in support of an institution of which these accounts were the foundation, is, that the same men voluntarily exposed themselves to harassing and perpetual labours, dangers, and sufferings. We want to know what these accounts were. We have the particulars, *i. e.* many particulars, from two of their own number. We have them from an attendant of one of the number, and who, there is reason to believe, was an inhabitant of Jerusalem at the time. We have them from a fourth writer, who accompanied the most laborious missionary of the institution in his travels; who, in the course of these travels, was frequently brought into the society of the rest; and who,

<sup>a</sup> Why should not the candid and modest preface of this historian be believed, as well as that which Dion Cassius prefixes to his *Life of Commodus*? "These things and the following I write not from the report of others, but from my own knowledge and observation." I see no reason to doubt but that both passages describe truly enough the situation of the authors.



let it be observed, begins his narrative by telling us that he is about to relate the things which had been delivered by those who were ministers of the word, and eye-witnesses of the facts. I do not know what information can be more satisfactory than this. We may, perhaps, perceive the force and value of it more sensibly, if we reflect how *requiring* we should have been if we had wanted it. Supposing it to be sufficiently proved, that the religion now professed among us owed its original to the preaching and ministry of a number of men, who, about eighteen centuries ago, set forth in the world a new system of religious opinions, founded upon certain extraordinary things which they related of a wonderful person who had appeared in Judea; suppose it to be also sufficiently proved, that, in the course and prosecution of their ministry, these men had subjected themselves to extreme hardships, fatigue, and peril; but suppose the accounts which they published had not been committed to writing till some ages after their times, or at least that no histories, but what had been composed some ages afterwards, had reached our hands; we should have said, and with reason, that we were willing to believe these men under the circumstances in which they delivered their testimony, but that we did not, at this day, know with sufficient evidence what their testimony was. Had we received the particulars of it from any of their own number, from any of those who lived and conversed with them, from any of their hearers, or even from any of their contemporaries, we should have had something to rely upon. Now, if our books be genuine, we have all these. We have the very species of information which, as it appears to me, our imagination would have carved out for us, if it had been wanting.

But I have said, that, if *any one* of the four Gospels be genuine, we have not only direct historical testimony to the point we contend for, but testimony which, so far as that point is concerned, cannot reasonably be rejected. If the first Gospel was really written by Matthew, we have the narrative of one of the number, from which to judge what were the miracles, and the kind of miracles, which the apostles attributed to Jesus. Although, for argument's sake, and only for argument's sake, we should allow that this Gospel had been erroneously ascribed to Matthew; yet, if the Gospel of Saint John be genuine, the observation holds with no less strength. Again, although the Gospels both of Matthew and John could be supposed to be spurious, yet, if the Gospel of Saint Luke were truly the

composition of that person, or of any person, be his name what it might, who was actually in the situation in which the author of that Gospel professes himself to have been, or if the Gospel which bears the name of Mark really proceeded from him ; we still, even upon the lowest supposition, possess the accounts of one writer at least, who was not only contemporary with the apostles, but associated with them in their ministry ; which authority seems sufficient, when the question is simply what it was which these apostles advanced.

I think it material to have this well noticed. The New Testament contains a great number of distinct writings, the genuineness of any one of which is almost sufficient to prove the truth of the religion : it contains, however, four distinct histories, the genuineness of any one of which is perfectly sufficient. If, therefore, we must be considered as encountering the risk of error in assigning the authors of our books, we are entitled to the advantage of so many separate probabilities. And although it should appear that some of the evangelists had seen and used each other's works, this discovery, whilst it subtracts indeed from their characters as testimonies strictly independent, diminishes, I conceive, little, either their separate authority, (by which I mean the authority of any one that is genuine,) or their mutual confirmation. For, let the most disadvantageous supposition possible be made concerning them ; let it be allowed, what I should have no great difficulty in admitting, that Mark compiled his history almost entirely from those of Matthew and Luke ; and let it also for a moment be supposed that these histories were not, in fact, written by Matthew and Luke ; yet, if it be true that Mark, a contemporary of the apostles, living in habits of society with the apostles, a fellow-traveller and fellow-labourer with some of them ; if, I say, it be true that this person made the compilation, it follows, that the writings from which he made it existed in the time of the apostles, and not only so, but that they were then in such esteem and credit, that a companion of the apostles formed a history out of them. Let the Gospel of Mark be called an epitome of that of Matthew ; if a person in the situation in which Mark is described to have been actually made the epitome, it affords the strongest possible attestation to the character of the original.

Again, parallelisms in sentences, in words, and in the order of words, have been traced out between the Gospel of Matthew



and that of Luke; which concurrence cannot easily be explained otherwise than by supposing, either that Luke had consulted Matthew's history, or, what appears to me in nowise incredible, that minutes of some of Christ's discourses, as well as brief memoirs of some passages of his life, had been committed to writing at the time; and that such written accounts had by both authors been occasionally admitted into their histories. Either supposition is perfectly consistent with the acknowledged formation of St. Luke's narrative, who professes not to write as an eye-witness, but to have investigated the original of every account which he delivers: in other words, to have collected them from such documents and testimonies, as he, who had the best opportunities of making inquiries, judged to be authentic. Therefore, allowing that this writer also, in some instances, borrowed from the Gospel which we call Matthew's, and once more allowing, for the sake of stating the argument, that that Gospel was not the production of the author to whom we ascribe it; yet still we have, in St. Luke's Gospel, a history given by a writer immediately connected with the transaction with the witnesses of it, with the persons engaged in it, and composed from materials which that person, thus situated, deemed to be safe sources of intelligence; in other words, whatever supposition be made concerning any or all the other Gospels, if Saint Luke's Gospel be genuine, we have *in it* a credible evidence of the point which we maintain.

The Gospel according to Saint John appears to be, and is on all hands allowed to be, an independent testimony, strictly and properly so called. Notwithstanding, therefore, any connexion, or supposed connexion, between some of the Gospels, I again repeat what I before said, that if any one of the four be genuine, we have, in that one, strong reason, from the character and situation of the writer, to believe that we possess the accounts which the original emissaries of the religion delivered.

Secondly: In treating of the written evidences of Christianity, next to their separate, we are to consider their aggregate authority. Now, there is in the evangelic history a cumulation of testimony which belongs hardly to any other history, but which our habitual mode of reading the Scriptures sometimes causes us to overlook. When a passage, in any wise relating to the history of Christ, is read to us out of the epistle of Clemens Romanus, the epistles of Ignatius, of Polycarp, or



from any other writing of that age, we are immediately sensible of the confirmation which it affords to the Scripture account. Here is a new witness. Now, if we had been accustomed to read the Gospel of Matthew alone, and had known that of Luke only as the generality of Christians know the writings of the apostolical fathers, that is, had known that such a writing was extant and acknowledged; when we came, for the first time, to look into what it contained, and found many of the facts which Matthew recorded; recorded also there, many other facts of a similar nature added, and throughout the whole work the same general series of transactions stated, and the same general character of the person who was the subject of the history preserved, I apprehend that we should feel our minds strongly impressed by this discovery of fresh evidence. We should feel a renewal of the same sentiment in first reading the Gospel of Saint John. That of Saint Mark perhaps would strike us as an abridgement of the history with which we were already acquainted; but we should naturally reflect, that if that history was abridged by such a person as Mark, or by any person of so early an age, it afforded one of the highest possible attestations to the value of the work. This successive disclosure of proof would leave us assured, that there must have been at least some reality in a story which not one, but many, had taken in hand to commit to writing. The very existence of four separate histories would satisfy us that the subject had a foundation; and when, amidst the variety which the different information of the different writers had supplied to their accounts, or which their different choice and judgement in selecting their materials had produced, we observed many facts to stand the same in all; of these facts, at least, we should conclude, that they were fixed in their credit and publicity. If, after this, we should come to the knowledge of a distinct history, and that also of the same age with the rest, taking up the subject where the others had left it, and carrying on a narrative of the effects produced in the world by the extraordinary causes of which we had already been informed, and which effects subsist at this day, we should think the reality of the original story in no little degree established by this supplement. If subsequent inquiries should bring to our knowledge, one after another, letters written by some of the principal agents in the business, upon the business, and during the time of their activity and concern in it, assuming all along and recognising the

original story, agitating the questions that arose out of it, pressing the obligations which resulted from it, giving advice and directions to those who acted upon it; I conceive that we should find, in every one of these, a still further support to the conclusion we had formed. At present, the weight of this successive confirmation is, in a great measure, unperceived by us. The evidence does not appear to us what it is; for, being from our infancy accustomed to regard the New Testament as one book, we see in it only one testimony. The whole occurs to us as a single evidence; and its different parts, not as distinct attestations, but as different portions only of the same. Yet in this conception of the subject, we are certainly mistaken; for the very discrepancies among the several documents which form our volume prove, if all other proof were wanting, that in their original composition they were separate, and most of them independent productions.

If we dispose our ideas in a different order, the matter stands thus:—Whilst the transaction was recent, and the original witnesses were at hand to relate it; and whilst the apostles were busied in preaching and travelling, in collecting disciples, in forming and regulating societies of converts, in supporting themselves against opposition; whilst they exercised their ministry under the harassings of frequent persecution, and in a state of almost continual alarm, it is not probable that, in this engaged, anxious, and unsettled condition of life, they would think immediately of writing histories for the information of the public or of posterity<sup>a</sup>. But it is very probable, that emergencies might draw from some of them occasional letters upon the subject of their mission, to converts, or to societies of converts, with which they were connected; or that they might address written discourses and exhortations to the disciples of the institution at large, which would be received and read with a respect proportioned to the character of the writer. Accounts in the mean time would get abroad of the extraordinary things that had been passing, written with different degrees of information and correctness. The extension of the Christian society, which could no longer be instructed by a personal intercourse with the apostles, and the possible circulation of imperfect or

<sup>a</sup> This thought occurred to Eusebius: "Nor were the apostles of Christ greatly concerned about the writing of books, being engaged in a more excellent ministry, which is above all human power." *Eccles. Hist.* l. iii. c. 24.—The same consideration accounts also for the paucity of Christian writings in the first century of its æra.



erroneous narratives, would soon teach some amongst them the expediency of sending forth authentic memoirs of the life and doctrine of their Master. When accounts appeared authorized by the name, and credit, and situation of the writers, recommended or recognised by the apostles and first preachers of the religion, or found to coincide with what the apostles and first preachers of the religion, had taught, other accounts would fall into disuse and neglect; whilst these, maintaining their reputation (as, if genuine and well founded, they would do) under the test of time, inquiry, and contradiction, might be expected to make their way into the hands of Christians of all countries of the world.

This seems the natural progress of the business; and with this the records in our possession, and the evidence concerning them, correspond. We have remaining, in the first place, many letters of the kind above described, which have been preserved with a care and fidelity answering to the respect with which we may suppose that such letters would be received. But as these letters were not written to prove the truth of the Christian religion, in the sense in which we regard that question; nor to convey information of facts, of which those to whom the letters were written had been previously informed; we are not to look in them for any thing more than incidental allusions to the Christian history. We are able, however, to gather from these documents various particular attestations which have been already enumerated; and this is a species of written evidence, as far as it goes, in the highest degree satisfactory, and in point of time perhaps the first. But for our more circumstantial information, we have, in the next place, five direct *histories*, bearing the names of persons acquainted, by their situation, with the truth of what they relate, and three of them purporting, in the very body of the narrative, to be written by such persons; of which books we know, that some were in the hands of those who were contemporaries of the apostles, and that, in the age immediately posterior to that, they were in the hands, we may say, of every one, and received by Christians with so much respect and deference, as to be constantly quoted and referred to by them, without any doubt of the truth of their accounts. They were treated as such histories, proceeding from such authorities, might expect to be treated. In the preface to one of our histories, we have intimations left us of the existence of some ancient accounts which are now lost. There is nothing



in this circumstance that can surprise us. It was to be expected, from the magnitude and novelty of the occasion, that such accounts would swarm. When better accounts came forth, these died away. Our present histories superseded others. They soon acquired a character and established a reputation which does not appear to have belonged to any other: that, at least, can be proved concerning them, which cannot be proved concerning any other.

But to return to the point which led to these reflections. By considering our records in either of the two views in which we have represented them, we shall perceive that we possess a *collection of proofs*, and not a naked or solitary testimony; and that the written evidence is of such a kind, and comes to us in such a state, as the natural order and progress of things, in the infancy of the institution, might be expected to produce.

Thirdly: The genuineness of the historical books of the New Testament is undoubtedly a point of importance, because the strength of their evidence is augmented by our knowledge of the situation of their authors, their relation to the subject, and the part which they sustained in the transaction; and the testimonies which we are able to produce compose a firm ground of persuasion, that the Gospels were written by the persons whose names they bear. Nevertheless, I must be allowed to state, that to the argument which I am endeavouring to maintain, this point is not essential; I mean, so essential as that the fate of the argument depends upon it. The question before us is, whether the Gospels exhibit the story which the apostles and first emissaries of the religion published, and *for* which they acted and suffered in the manner in which, for some miraculous story or other, they did act and suffer. Now let us suppose that we possessed no other information concerning these books than that they were written by early disciples of Christianity; that they were known and read during the time, or near the time, of the original apostles of the religion; that by Christians whom the apostles instructed, by societies of Christians which the apostles founded, these books were *received*, (by which term "received," I mean that they were believed to contain authentic accounts of the transactions upon which the religion rested, and accounts which were accordingly used, repeated, and relied upon,) this reception would be a valid proof that these books, whoever were the authors of them, must have accorded with

what the apostles taught. A reception by the first race of Christians, is evidence that they agreed with what the first teachers of the religion delivered. In particular, if they had not agreed with what the apostles themselves preached, how could they have gained credit in churches and societies which the apostles established?

Now the fact of their early existence, and not only of their existence but their reputation, is made out by some ancient testimonies which do not happen to specify the names of the writers: add to which, what hath been already hinted, that two out of the four Gospels contain averments in the body of the history, which, though they do not disclose the names, fix the time and situation of the authors, viz. that one was written by an eye-witness of the sufferings of Christ, the other by a contemporary of the apostles. In the Gospel of Saint John (xix. 35), after describing the crucifixion, with the particular circumstance of piercing Christ's side with a spear, the historian adds, as for himself, "and he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." Again (xxi. 24), after relating a conversation which passed between Peter and "the disciple," as it is there expressed, "whom Jesus loved," it is added, "this is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things." This testimony, let it be remarked, is not the less worthy of regard, because it is, in one view, imperfect. The name is not mentioned; which if a fraudulent purpose had been intended, would have been done. The third of our present Gospels purports to have been written by the person who wrote the Acts of the Apostles; in which latter history, or rather latter part of the same history, the author, by using in various places the first person plural, declares himself to have been a contemporary of all, and a companion of one, of the original preachers of the religion.

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## CHAPTER IX.

*There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that*

*they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

#### OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

NOT forgetting, therefore, what credit is due to the evangelical history, supposing even any one of the four Gospels to be genuine; what credit is due to the Gospels, even supposing nothing to be known concerning them but that they were written by early disciples of the religion, and received with deference by early Christian churches; more especially not forgetting what credit is due to the New Testament in its capacity of *cumulative* evidence; we now proceed to state the proper and distinct proofs, which show not only the general value of these records, but their specific authority, and the high probability there is that they actually came from the persons whose names they bear.

There are, however, a few preliminary reflections, by which we may draw up with more regularity to the propositions upon which the close and particular discussion of the subject depends. Of which nature are the following:

I. We are able to produce a great number of ancient *manuscripts*, found in many different countries, and in countries widely distant from each other, all of them anterior to the art of printing, some certainly seven or eight hundred years old, and some which have been preserved probably above a thousand years<sup>a</sup>. We have also many ancient *versions* of these books, and some of them into languages which are not at present, nor for many ages have been, spoken in any part of the world. The existence of these manuscripts and versions proves that the Scriptures were not the production of any modern contrivance. It does away also the uncertainty which hangs over such publications as the works, real or pretended, of Ossian and Rowley, in which the editors are challenged to produce their manuscripts, and to show where they obtained their copies. The number of manuscripts, far exceeding those of any other book, and their wide dispersion, afford an argument, in some measure to the senses, that the Scriptures anciently, in like manner, as at this day, were more read and sought after than any other books, and that also in many different countries. The greatest part of spu-

<sup>a</sup> The Alexandrian manuscript, now in the British Museum, was written probably in the fourth or fifth century.



rious Christian writings are utterly lost, the rest preserved by some single manuscript. There is weight also in Dr. Bentley's observation, that the New Testament has suffered less injury by the errors of transcribers than the works of any profane author of the same size and antiquity; that is, there never was any writing, in the preservation and purity of which the world was so interested or so careful.

II. An argument of great weight with those who are judges of the proofs upon which it is founded, and capable, through their testimony, of being addressed to every understanding, is that which arises from the style and language of the New Testament. It is just such a language as might be expected from the apostles, from persons of their age and in their situation, and from no other persons. It is the style neither of classic authors, nor of the ancient Christian fathers, but Greek coming from men of Hebrew origin; abounding, that is, with Hebraic and Syriac idioms, such as would naturally be found in the writings of men who used a language spoken indeed where they lived, but not the common dialect of the country. This happy peculiarity is a strong proof of the genuineness of these writings: for who should forge them? The Christian fathers were for the most part totally ignorant of Hebrew, and therefore were not likely to insert Hebraisms and Syriasms into their writings. The few who had a knowledge of the Hebrew, as Justin Martyr, Origen, and Epiphanius, wrote in a language which bears no resemblance to that of the New Testament. The Nazarenes, who understood Hebrew, used chiefly, perhaps almost entirely, the Gospel of Saint Matthew, and therefore cannot be suspected of forging the rest of the sacred writings. The argument, at any rate, proves the antiquity of these books; that they belonged to the age of the apostles; that they could be composed indeed in no other <sup>a</sup>.

III. Why should we question the genuineness of these books? Is it for that they contain accounts of supernatural events? I apprehend that this, at the bottom, is the real, though secret, cause of our hesitation about them: for, had the writings inscribed with the names of Matthew and John related nothing but ordinary history, there would have been no more doubt whether these writings were theirs, than there is concerning the acknowledged works of Josephus or Philo; that is, there would

<sup>a</sup> See this argument stated more at large in Michaelis's Introduction, (Marsh's translation,) vol. i. c. ii. sect. 10, from which these observations are taken.

have been no doubt at all. Now it ought to be considered that this reason, however it may apply to the credit which is given to a writer's judgement or veracity, affects the question of genuineness very indirectly. The works of Bede exhibit many wonderful relations: but who, for that reason, doubts that they were written by Bede? The same of a multitude of other authors. To which may be added, that we ask no more for our books than what we allow to other books in some sort similar to ours: we do not deny the genuineness of the Koran; we admit that the history of Apollonius Tyanæus, purporting to be written by Philostratus, was really written by Philostratus.

IV. If it had been an easy thing in the early times of the institution to have forged Christian writings, and to have obtained currency and reception to the forgeries, we should have had many appearing in the name of Christ himself. No writings would have been received with so much avidity and respect as these: consequently none afforded so great temptation to forgery. Yet have we heard but of one attempt of this sort, deserving of the smallest notice, *that* in a piece of a very few lines, and so far from succeeding, I mean, from obtaining acceptance and reputation, or an acceptance and reputation in anywise similar to that which can be proved to have attended the books of the New Testament, that it is not so much as mentioned by any writer of the first three centuries. The learned reader need not be informed that I mean the epistle of Christ to Abgarus, king of Edessa, found at present in the work of Eusebius<sup>a</sup>, as a piece acknowledged by him, though not without considerable doubt whether the whole passage be not an interpolation, as it is most certain, that, after the publication of Eusebius's work, this epistle was universally rejected<sup>b</sup>.

V. If the ascription of the Gospels to their respective authors had been arbitrary or conjectural, they would have been ascribed to more eminent men. This observation holds concerning the first three Gospels, the reputed authors of which were enabled, by their situation, to obtain true intelligence, and were

<sup>a</sup> Hist. Eccl. lib. i. c. 15.

<sup>b</sup> Augustin, A.D. 895, (De Consens. Evang. c. 34,) had *heard* that the Pagans pretended to be possessed of an epistle from Christ to Peter and Paul; but he had never seen it, and appears to doubt of the existence of any such piece, either genuine or spurious. No other ancient writer mentions it. He also, and he alone, notices, and that in order to condemn it, an epistle ascribed to Christ by the Manichees, A.D. 270, and a short hymn attributed to him by the Priscillianists, A.D. 378. (cont. Faust. Man. lib. xxviii. c. 4.) The lateness of the writer who notices these things, the manner in which he notices them, and, above all, the silence of every preceding writer, render them unworthy of consideration.

likely to deliver an honest account of what they knew, but were persons not distinguished in the history by extraordinary marks of notice or commendation. Of the apostles, I hardly know any one of whom less is said than of Matthew, or of whom the little that is said is less calculated to magnify his character. Of Mark, nothing is said in the Gospels; and what is said of any person of that name in the Acts, and in the Epistles, in no part bestows praise or eminence upon him. The name of Luke is mentioned only in Saint Paul's Epistles<sup>a</sup>, and that very transiently. The judgement, therefore, which assigned these writings to these authors proceeded, it may be presumed, upon proper knowledge and evidence, and not upon a voluntary choice of names.

VI. Christian writers and Christian churches appear to have soon arrived at a very general agreement upon the subject, and that without the interposition of any public authority. When the diversity of opinion, which prevailed, and prevails among Christians in other points, is considered, their concurrence in the canon of Scripture is remarkable, and of great weight, especially as it seems to have been the result of private and free inquiry. We have no knowledge of any interference of authority in the question, before the council of Laodicea in the year 363. Probably the decree of this council rather declared than regulated the public judgment, or, more properly speaking, the judgment of some neighbouring churches; the council itself consisting of no more than thirty or forty bishops of Lydia and the adjoining countries<sup>b</sup>. Nor does its authority seem to have extended further; for we find numerous Christian writers, after this time, discussing the question, "What books were entitled to be received as Scripture," with great freedom, upon proper grounds of evidence, and without any reference to the decision at Laodicea.

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These considerations are not to be neglected: but of an argument concerning the genuineness of ancient writings, the substance, undoubtedly, and strength, is ancient testimony.

This testimony it is necessary to exhibit somewhat in detail; for when Christian advocates merely tell us, that we have the same reason for believing the Gospels to be written by the evangelists whose names they bear, as we have for believing the

<sup>a</sup> Col. iv. 14. 2 Tim. iv. 11. Philem. 24.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, *Cred.* vol. viii. p. 291, et seq.



Commentaries to be Cæsar's, the *Æneid* Virgil's, or the Orations Cicero's, they content themselves with an imperfect representation. They state nothing more than what is true, but they do not state the truth correctly. In the number, variety, and early date of our testimonies, we far exceed all other ancient books. For one, which the most celebrated work of the most celebrated Greek or Roman writer can allege, we produce many. But then it is more requisite in our books, than in theirs, to separate and distinguish them from spurious competitors. The result, I am convinced, will be satisfactory to every fair inquirer: but this circumstance renders an inquiry necessary.

In a work, however, like the present, there is a difficulty in finding a place for evidence of this kind. To pursue the details of proofs throughout, would be to transcribe a great part of Dr. Lardner's eleven octavo volumes: to leave the argument without proofs, is to leave it without effect; for the persuasion produced by this species of evidence depends upon a view and induction of the particulars which compose it.

The method which I propose to myself is, first, to place before the reader, in one view, the propositions which comprise the several heads of our testimony, and afterwards to repeat the same propositions in so many distinct sections, with the necessary authorities subjoined to each <sup>a</sup>.

The following, then, are the allegations upon the subject, which are capable of being established by proof:—

I. That the historical books of the New Testament, meaning thereby the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, are quoted, or alluded to, by a series of Christian writers, beginning with those who were contemporary with the apostles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in close and regular succession from their time to the present.

II. That when they are quoted, or alluded to, they are quoted or alluded to with peculiar respect, as books *sui generis*; as possessing an authority which belonged to no other books, and as conclusive in all questions and controversies amongst Christians.

III. That they were, in very early times, collected into a distinct volume.

IV. That they were distinguished by appropriate names and titles of respect.

<sup>a</sup> The reader, when he has the propositions before him, will observe that the argument, if he should omit the sections, proceeds connectedly from this point.

V. That they were publicly read and expounded in the religious assemblies of the early Christians.

VI. That commentaries were written upon them, harmonies formed out of them, different copies carefully collated, and versions of them made into different languages.

VII. That they were received by Christians of different sects, by many heretics as well as catholics, and usually appealed to by both sides in the controversies which arose in those days.

VIII. That the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of Saint Paul, the first epistle of John, and the first of Peter, were received without doubt, by those who doubted concerning the other books which are included in our present canon.

IX. That the Gospels were attacked by the early adversaries of Christianity, as books containing the accounts upon which the religion was founded.

X. That formal catalogues of authentic Scriptures were published; in all which our present sacred histories were included.

XI. That these propositions cannot be affirmed of any other books claiming to be books of Scripture; by which are meant those books which are commonly called apocryphal books of the New Testament.

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## SECTION I.

*The historical books of the New Testament, meaning thereby the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, are quoted, or alluded to, by a series of Christian writers, beginning with those who were contemporary with the apostles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in close and regular succession from their time to the present.*

THE medium of proof stated in this proposition is, of all others, the most unquestionable, the least liable to any practices of fraud, and is not diminished by the lapse of ages. Bishop Burnet, in the History of his Own Times, inserts various extracts from Lord Clarendon's History. One such insertion is a proof, that Lord Clarendon's History was extant at the time when Bishop Burnet wrote, that it had been read by Bishop Burnet, that it was received by Bishop Burnet as a work of Lord Clarendon, and also regarded by him as an authentic account of the

transactions which it relates; and it will be a proof of these points a thousand years hence, or as long as the books exist. Quintilian having quoted as Cicero's<sup>a</sup>, that well-known trait of dissembled vanity:—"Si quid est in me ingenii, Judices, quod sentio quam sit exiguum;"—the quotation would be strong evidence, were there any doubt, that the oration, which opens with this address, actually came from Cicero's pen. These instances, however simple, may serve to point out to a reader who is little accustomed to such researches, the nature and value of the argument.

The testimonies which we have to bring forward under this proposition are the following:

I. There is extant an epistle ascribed to Barnabas<sup>b</sup>, the companion of Paul. It is quoted as the epistle of Barnabas, by Clement of Alexandria, A.D. CXCIV.; by Origen, A.D. CCXXX. It is mentioned by Eusebius, A.D. CCCXV., and by Jerome, A.D. CCCXCII., as an ancient work in their time, bearing the name of Barnabas, and as well known and read amongst Christians, though not accounted a part of Scripture. It purports to have been written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, during the calamities which followed that disaster; and it bears the character of the age to which it professes to belong.

In this epistle appears the following remarkable passage:—"Let us, therefore, beware lest it come upon us, *as it is written*; There are many called, few chosen." From the expression, "as it is written," we infer with certainty, that at the time when the author of this epistle lived, there was a book extant, well known to Christians, and of authority amongst them, containing these words:—"Many are called, few chosen." Such a book is our present Gospel of Saint Matthew, in which this text is twice found<sup>c</sup>, and is found in no other book now known. There is a further observation to be made upon the terms of the quotation. The writer of the epistle was a Jew. The phrase "it is written," was the very form in which the Jews quoted their Scriptures. It is not probable, therefore, that he would have used this phrase, and without qualification, of any books but what had acquired a kind of Scriptural authority. If the passage re-

<sup>a</sup> Quint. lib. xi. c. i.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, Cred. edit. 1755, vol. i. p. 23, et seq. The reader will observe from the references, that the materials of these sections are almost entirely extracted from Dr. Lardner's work; my office consisted in arrangement and selection.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xx. 16; xxii. 14.



marked in this ancient writing had been found in one of Saint Paul's Epistles, it would have been esteemed by every one a high testimony to Saint Matthew's Gospel. It ought, therefore, to be remembered, that the writing in which it is found was probably by very few years posterior to those of Saint Paul.

Beside this passage, there are also in the epistle before us several others, in which the sentiment is the same with what we meet with in Saint Matthew's Gospel, and two or three in which we recognise the same words. In particular, the author of the epistle repeats the precept, "Give to every one that asketh thee;"<sup>a</sup> and saith that Christ chose as his apostles, who were to preach the Gospel, men who were great sinners, that he might show that he came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."<sup>b</sup>

II. We are in possession of an epistle written by Clement, bishop of Rome<sup>c</sup>, whom ancient writers, without any doubt or scruple, assert to have been the Clement whom Saint Paul mentions, Phil. iv. 3; "with *Clement* also, and other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life." This epistle is spoken of by the ancients as an epistle acknowledged by all; and, as Irenæus well represents its value, "written by Clement, who had seen the blessed apostles, and conversed with them; who had the preaching of the apostles still sounding in his ears, and their traditions before his eyes." It is addressed to the church of Corinth; and what alone may seem almost decisive of its authenticity, Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, about the year 170, *i. e.* about eighty or ninety years after the epistle was written, bears witness, "that it had been wont to be read in that church from ancient times."

This epistle affords, amongst others, the following valuable passages:—"Especially remembering the words of the Lord Jesus which he spake, teaching gentleness and long-suffering: for thus he said<sup>d</sup>: 'Be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven unto you; as you do, so shall it be done unto you; as you give, so shall it be given unto you; as ye judge, so shall ye be judged; as ye show kindness, so shall kindness be shown unto you; with what measure ye

<sup>a</sup> Matt. v. 42.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. ix. 13.

<sup>c</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 62, et seq.

<sup>d</sup> "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Matt. v. 7.—"Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given unto you." Luke vi. 37, 38. "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Matt. vii. 1, 2.

mète, with the same shall it be measured to you.' By this command, and by these rules, let us establish ourselves, that we may always walk obediently to his holy words."

Again; "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, for he said, 'Wo to that man by whom offences come; it were better for him that he had not been born, than that he should offend one of my elect; it were better for him that a mill-stone should be tied about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the sea, than that he should offend one of my little ones.'"<sup>a</sup>

In both these passages, we perceive the high respect paid to the words of Christ as recorded by the evangelists; "*Remember* the words of the Lord Jesus;—by this command, and by these rules, let us establish ourselves, that we may always walk obediently to his holy words." We perceive also in Clement a total unconsciousness of doubt, whether these were the real words of Christ, which are read as such in the Gospels. This observation indeed belongs to the whole series of testimony, and especially to the most ancient part of it. Whenever any thing now read in the Gospels is met with in an early Christian writing, it is always observed to stand there as acknowledged truth, *i. e.* to be introduced without hesitation, doubt, or apology. It is to be observed also, that, as this epistle was written in the name of the church of Rome, and addressed to the church of Corinth, it ought to be taken as exhibiting the judgement not only of Clement, who drew up the letter, but of these churches themselves, at least as to the authority of the books referred to.

It may be said, that, as Clement has not used words of quotation, it is not certain that he refers to any book whatever. The words of Christ, which he has put down, he might himself have heard from the apostles, or might have received through the ordinary medium of oral tradition. This has been said: but that no such inference can be drawn from the absence of words of quotation, is proved by the three following considerations:—First, that Clement, in the very same manner, namely, without any mark of reference, uses a passage now found in the epistle to the Romans<sup>b</sup>; which passage, from the peculiarity of the words which compose it, and from their order, it is manifest that

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xviii. 6. "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea." The latter part of the passage in Clement agrees more exactly with Luke xvii. 2: "It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."

<sup>b</sup> Rom. i. 29.

he must have taken from the book. The same remark may be repeated of some very singular sentiments in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Secondly, that there are many sentences of Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians standing in Clement's epistle without any sign of quotation, which yet certainly are quotations; because it appears that Clement had Saint Paul's epistle before him, inasmuch as in one place he mentions it in terms too express to leave us in any doubt:—"Take into your hands the epistle of the blessed apostle Paul." Thirdly, that this method of adopting words of Scripture without reference or acknowledgment was, as will appear in the sequel, a method in general use amongst the most ancient Christian writers.—These analogies not only repel the objection, but cast the presumption on the other side, and afford a considerable degree of positive proof, that the words in question have been borrowed from the places of Scripture in which we now find them.

But take it if you will the other way, that Clement had heard these words from the apostles or first teachers of Christianity; with respect to the precise point of our argument, *viz.* that the Scriptures contain what the apostles taught, this supposition may serve almost as well.

III. Near the conclusion of the epistle to the Romans, Saint Paul, amongst others, sends the following salutation: "Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, *Hermas*, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them."

Of *Hermas*, who appears in this catalogue of Roman Christians as contemporary with Saint Paul, a book bearing the name, and it is most probable rightly, is still remaining. It is called the Shepherd<sup>a</sup>, or Pastor of *Hermas*. Its antiquity is incontestible, from the quotations of it in Irenæus, A.D. 178; Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 194; Tertullian, A.D. 200; Origen, A.D. 230. The notes of time extant in the epistle itself agree with its title, and with the testimonies concerning it, for it purports to have been written during the life-time of Clement.

In this piece are tacit allusions to Saint Matthew's, Saint Luke's, and Saint John's Gospels; that is to say, there are applications of thoughts and expressions found in these Gospels, without citing the place or writer from which they were taken. In this form appear in *Hermas* the confessing and denying of Christ<sup>b</sup>; the parable of the seed sown<sup>c</sup>; the comparison of

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 111.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. x. 32, 33, or, Luke xii. 8, 9.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xiii. 3, or, Luke viii. 5.



Christ's disciples to little children ; the saying, " he that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery ;"<sup>a</sup> the singular expression, " having received all power from his Father," in probable allusion to Matt. xxviii. 18 ; and Christ being the " gate," or only way of coming " to God," in plain allusion to John xiv. 6 ; x. 7. 9. There is also a probable allusion to Acts v. 32.

This piece is the representation of a vision, and has by many been accounted a weak and fanciful performance. I therefore observe, that the character of the writing has little to do with the purpose for which we adduce it. It is the age in which it was composed, that gives the value to its testimony.

IV. Ignatius, as it is testified by ancient Christian writers, became bishop of Antioch about thirty-seven years after Christ's ascension ; and therefore, from his time, and place, and station, it is probable that he had known and conversed with many of the apostles. Epistles of Ignatius are referred to by Polycarp, his contemporary. Passages found in the epistles now extant under his name, are quoted by Irenæus, A.D. 178 ; by Origen, A.D. 230 : and the occasion of writing the epistles is given at large by Eusebius and Jerome. What are called the smaller epistles of Ignatius, are generally deemed to be those which were read by Irenæus, Origen, and Eusebius<sup>b</sup>.

In these epistles are various undoubted allusions to the Gospels of Saint Matthew and Saint John ; yet so far of the same form with those in the preceding articles, that, like them, they are not accompanied with marks of quotation.

Of these allusions the following are clear specimens :

- |                     |   |   |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Matt. <sup>c</sup>  | { | <p>" Christ was baptized of John, that <i>all righteousness might be fulfilled by him.</i>"</p> <p>" <i>Be ye wise as serpents in all things, and harmless as a dove.</i>"</p>  |
| John <sup>d</sup> . | { | <p>" Yet the Spirit is not deceived, being from God : for it knows <i>whence it comes, and whither it goes.</i>"</p> <p>" He (Christ) is the <i>door</i> of the Father, by which <i>enter in</i> Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, and the apostles, and the church."</p> |

<sup>a</sup> Luke xvi. 18.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 147.

<sup>c</sup> Chap. iii. 15. " For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

Chap. x. 16. " Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

<sup>d</sup> Chap. iii. 8. " The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell *whence it cometh and whither it goeth* ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Chap. x. 9. " I am the door ; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved."

As to the manner of quotation, this is observable ;—Ignatius, in one place, speaks of Saint Paul in terms of high respect, and quotes his Epistle to the Ephesians by *name* ; yet, in several other places, he borrows words and sentiments from the same epistle without mentioning it ; which shows, that this was his general manner of using and applying writings then extant, and then of high authority.

V. Polycarp<sup>a</sup> had been taught by the apostles ; had conversed with many who had seen Christ ; was also by the apostles appointed bishop of Smyrna. This testimony concerning Polycarp is given by Irenæus, who in his youth had seen him : —“ I can tell the place,” saith Irenæus, “ in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and his going out and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his person, and the discourses he made to the people, and how he related his conversation with John, and others who had seen the Lord, and how he related their sayings, and what he had heard concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrine, as he had received them from the eye-witnesses of the word of life : all which Polycarp related agreeable to the Scriptures.”

Of Polycarp, whose proximity to the age and country and persons of the apostles is thus attested, we have one undoubted epistle remaining. And this, though a short letter, contains nearly forty clear allusions to books of the New Testament ; which is strong evidence of the respect which Christians of that age bore for these books.

Amongst these, although the writings of Saint Paul are more frequently used by Polycarp than any other parts of Scripture, there are copious allusions to the Gospel of Saint Matthew, some to passages found in the Gospels both of Matthew and Luke, and some which more nearly resemble the words in Luke.

I select the following, as fixing the authority of the Lord's prayer, and the use of it amongst the primitive Christians : “ If therefore we *pray* the Lord, that *he will forgive us, we ought also to forgive.*”

“ With supplication *beseeking* the all-seeing God *not to lead us into temptation.*”

And the following, for the sake of repeating an observation already made, that words of our Lord found in our Gospels, were at this early day quoted as spoken by him ; and not only

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 192.

so, but quoted with so little question or consciousness of doubt about their being really his words, as not even to mention, much less to canvass, the authority from which they were taken :

“ But remembering what the Lord said, teaching, Judge not, that ye be not judged ; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven ; be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy ; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”<sup>a</sup>

Supposing Polycarp to have had these words from the books in which we now find them, it is manifest that these books were considered by him, and, as he thought, considered by his readers, as authentic accounts of Christ’s discourses ; and that that point was incontestible.

The following is a decisive, though what we call a tacit reference to Saint Peter’s speech in the Acts of the Apostles :—  
“ whom God hath raised, having loosed the pains of death.”<sup>b</sup>

VI. Papias<sup>c</sup>, a hearer of John, and companion of Polycarp, as Irenæus attests, and of that age, as all agree, in a passage quoted by Eusebius, from a work now lost, expressly ascribes the respective Gospels to Matthew and Mark ; and in a manner which proves that these Gospels must have publicly borne the names of these authors at that time, and probably long before ; for Papias does not say that one Gospel was written by Matthew, and another by Mark ; but, assuming this as perfectly well known, he tells us from what materials Mark collected his account, *viz.* from Peter’s preaching, and in what language Matthew wrote, *viz.* in Hebrew. Whether Papias was well informed in this statement, or not ; to the point for which I produce this testimony, namely, that these books bore these names at this time, his authority is complete.

The writers hitherto alleged had all lived and conversed with some of the apostles. The works of theirs which remain are in general very short pieces, yet rendered extremely valuable by their antiquity ; and none, short as they are, but what contain some important testimony to our historical Scriptures<sup>d</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. vii. 1, 2 ; v. 7 ; Luke vi. 37, 38.

<sup>b</sup> Acts ii. 24.

<sup>c</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 239.

<sup>d</sup> That the quotations are more thinly strown in these, than in the writings of the next and of succeeding ages, is in a good measure accounted for by the observation, that the Scriptures of the New Testament had not *yet*, nor by their recency hardly could have, become a general part of Christian education ; read as the Old Testament was by Jews and Christians from their childhood, and thereby intimately mixing, as that had long done, with all their religious ideas, and with their language upon religious subjects. In process of time, and as soon perhaps



VII. Not long after these, that is, not much more than twenty years after the last, follows Justin Martyr<sup>a</sup>. His remaining works are much larger than any that have yet been noticed. Although the nature of his two principal writings, one of which was addressed to heathens, and the other was a conference with a Jew, did not lead him to such frequent appeals to Christian books, as would have appeared in a discourse intended for Christian readers; we nevertheless reckon up in them between twenty and thirty quotations of the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, certain, distinct, and copious: if each verse be counted separately, a much greater number; if each expression, a very great one<sup>b</sup>.

We meet with quotations of three of the Gospels within the compass of half a page: "And in other words he says, Depart from me into outer darkness, which the Father hath prepared for Satan and his angels," (which is from Matthew, xxv. 41.) "And again he said in other words, I give unto you power to tread upon serpents, and scorpions, and venomous beasts, and upon all the power of the enemy." (This from Luke, x. 19.) "And before he was crucified, he said, The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the Scribes and Pharisees, and be crucified, and rise again the third day." (This from Mark, viii. 31.)

In another place, Justin quotes a passage in the history of Christ's birth, as delivered by Matthew and John, and fortifies his quotation by this remarkable testimony: "As they have taught, who have written the history of all things concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ; and we believe them."

Quotations are also found from the Gospel of Saint John.

What, moreover, seems extremely material to be observed is, that in all Justin's works, from which might be extracted almost a complete life of Christ, there are but two instances, in which he refers to any thing as said or done by Christ, which is not related concerning him in our present Gospels: which shows, that these Gospels, and these, we may say, alone, were the authorities from which the Christians of that day drew the information upon which they depended. One of these instances

as could be expected, this came to be the case. And then we perceive the effect, in a proportionably greater frequency, as well as copiousness of allusion.—Mich. Introd. c. ii. sect. vi.

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 258.

<sup>b</sup> "He cites our present canon, and particularly our four Gospels, continually, I dare say, above two hundred times." Jones's New and Full Method. Append. vol. i. p. 589, ed. 1726.

is of a saying of Christ, not met with in any book now extant<sup>a</sup>. The other, of a circumstance in Christ's baptism, namely, a fiery or luminous appearance upon the water, which, according to Epiphanius, is noticed in the Gospel of the Hebrews: and which might be true: but which, whether true or false, is mentioned by Justin, with a plain mark of diminution when compared with what he quotes as resting upon Scripture authority. The reader will advert to this distinction: "And then, when Jesus came to the river Jordan, where John was baptizing, as Jesus descended into the water, a fire also was kindled in Jordan: and when he came up out of the water, *the apostles of this our Christ have written*, that the Holy Ghost lighted upon him as a dove."

All the references in Justin are made without mentioning the author; which proves that these books were perfectly notorious, and that there were no other accounts of Christ then extant, or, at least, no other so received and credited as to make it necessary to distinguish these from the rest.

But although Justin mentions not the author's name, he calls the books, "Memoirs composed by the Apostles;" "Memoirs composed by the Apostles and their Companions;" which descriptions, the latter especially, exactly suit with the titles which the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles now bear.

VIII. Hegesippus<sup>b</sup> came about thirty years after Justin. His testimony is remarkable only for this particular; that he relates of himself, that, travelling from Palestine to Rome, he visited, on his journey, many bishops; and that, "in every succession, and in every city, the same doctrine is taught, which the Law and the Prophets, and the *Lord* teacheth." This is an important attestation, from good authority, and of high antiquity. It is generally understood that by the word "Lord," Hegesippus intended some writing or writings, containing the teaching of Christ; in which sense alone the term combines with the

<sup>a</sup> "Wherefore also our Lord Jesus Christ has said, In whatsoever I shall find you, in the same I will also judge you." Possibly Justin designed not to quote any text, but to represent the sense of many of our Lord's sayings. Fabricius has observed, that this saying has been quoted by many writers, and that Justin is the only one who ascribes it to our Lord, and that perhaps by a slip of his memory.

Words resembling these are read repeatedly in Ezekiel; "I will judge them according to their ways;" (chap. vii. 3; xxxiii. 20.) It is remarkable that Justin had just before expressly quoted Ezekiel. Mr. Jones upon this circumstance founded a conjecture, that Justin wrote only "the Lord hath said," intending to quote the words of God, or rather the sense of those words in Ezekiel; and that some transcriber, imagining these to be the words of Christ, inserted in his copy the addition "Jesus Christ." Vol. i. p. 539.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 314.

other terms "Law and Prophets," which denote writings; and together with them admit of the verb "teacheth" in the present tense. Then, that these writings were some or all of the books of the New Testament, is rendered probable from hence, that in the fragments of his works, which are preserved in Eusebius, and in a writer of the ninth century, enough, though it be little, is left to show, that Hegesippus expressed divers things in the style of the Gospels, and of the Acts of the Apostles; that he referred to the history in the second chapter of Matthew, and recited a text of that Gospel as spoken by our Lord.

IX. At this time, viz. about the year 170, the churches of Lyons and Vienne, in France, sent a relation of the sufferings of their martyrs to the churches of Asia and Phrygia<sup>a</sup>. The epistle is preserved entire by Eusebius. And what carries in some measure the testimony of these churches to a higher age, is, that they had now for their bishop, Pothinus, who was ninety years old, and whose early life consequently must have immediately joined on with the times of the apostles. In this epistle are exact references to the Gospels of Luke and John, and to the Acts of the Apostles; the form of reference the same as in all the preceding articles. That from Saint John is in these words: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the Lord, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service."<sup>b</sup>

X. The evidence now opens upon us full and clear. Irenæus<sup>c</sup> succeeded Pothinus as bishop of Lyons. In his youth he had been a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John. In the time in which he lived, he was distant not much more than a century from the publication of the Gospels; in his instruction, only by one step separated from the persons of the apostles. He asserts of himself and his contemporaries, that they were able to reckon up, in all the principal churches, the succession of bishops from the first<sup>d</sup>. I remark these particulars concerning Irenæus with more formality than usual; because the testimony which this writer affords to the historical books of the New Testament, to their authority, and to the titles which they bear, is express, positive, and exclusive. One principal passage, in which this testi-

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 332.    <sup>b</sup> John xvi. 2.    <sup>c</sup> Lardner, vol. i. p. 344.

<sup>d</sup> Adv. Hæres. l. iii. c. 3.



mony is contained, opens with a precise assertion of the point which we have laid down as the foundation of our argument, viz. that the story which the Gospels exhibit, is the story which the apostles told. "We have not received," saith Irenæus, "the knowledge of the way of our salvation by any others than those by whom the Gospel has been brought to us. Which Gospel they first preached, and afterwards, by the will of God, committed to writing, that it might be for time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith.—For after that our Lord arose from the dead, and they (the apostles) were endowed from above with the power of the Holy Ghost coming down upon them, they received a perfect knowledge of all things. They then went forth to all the ends of the earth, declaring to men the blessing of heavenly peace, having all of them, and every one, alike the Gospel of God. Matthew then, among the Jews, wrote a Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel at Rome, and founding a church there: and after their exit, Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter; and Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the Gospel preached by him (Paul). Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, he likewise published a Gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia." If any modern divine should write a book upon the genuineness of the Gospels, he could not assert it more expressly, or state their original more distinctly than Irenæus hath done within little more than a hundred years after they were published.

The correspondency, in the days of Irenæus, of the oral and written tradition, and the deduction of the oral tradition through various channels from the age of the apostles, which was then lately passed, and, by consequence, the probability that the books truly delivered what the apostles taught, is inferred also with strict regularity from another passage of his works. "The tradition of the apostles," this father saith, "hath spread itself over the whole universe; and all they, who search after the sources of truth, will find this tradition to be held sacred in every church. We might enumerate all those who have been appointed bishops to these churches by the apostles, and all their successors, up to our days. It is by this uninterrupted succession that we have received the tradition which actually exists in the church, as also the doctrines of truth, as it was

preached by the apostles.”<sup>a</sup> The reader will observe upon this, that the same Irenæus, who is now stating the strength and uniformity of the tradition, we have before seen recognizing, in the fullest manner, the authority of the written records; from which we are entitled to conclude, that they were then conformable to each other.

I have said, that the testimony of Irenæus in favour of our Gospels, is *exclusive* of all others. I allude to a remarkable passage in his works, in which, for some reasons sufficiently fanciful, he endeavours to show, that there could be neither more nor fewer Gospels than *four*. With his argument we have no concern: The position itself proves that four, and only four, Gospels were at that time publicly read and acknowledged. That these were our Gospels, and in the state in which we now have them, is shown, from many other places of this writer beside that which we have already alleged. He mentions how Matthew begins his Gospel, how Mark begins and ends his, and their supposed reasons for so doing. He enumerates at length the several passages of Christ's history in Luke, which are not found in any of the other evangelists. He states the particular design with which Saint John composed his Gospel, and accounts for the doctrinal declarations which precede the narrative.

To the book of the Acts of the Apostles, its author, and credit, the testimony of Irenæus is no less explicit. Referring to the account of Saint Paul's conversion and vocation, in the ninth chapter of that book, “Nor can they,” says he, meaning the parties with whom he argues, “show that he is not to be credited, who has related to us the truth with the greatest exactness.” In another place, he has actually collected the several texts, in which the writer of the history is represented as accompanying Saint Paul; which leads him to deliver a summary of almost the whole of the last twelve chapters of the book.

In an author thus abounding with references and allusions to the Scriptures, there is not one to any apocryphal Christian writing whatever. This is a broad line of distinction between our sacred books, and the pretensions of all others.

The force of the testimony of the period which we have considered, is greatly strengthened by the observation, that it is the testimony, and the concurring testimony, of writers who lived in countries remote from one another. Clement flourished

<sup>a</sup> Iren. in Hæc. l. iii. c. 3.

at Rome, Ignatius at Antioch, Polycarp at Smyrna, Justin Martyr in Syria, and Irenæus in France.

XI. Omitting Athenagoras and Theophilus, who lived about this time<sup>a</sup>; in the remaining works of the former of whom are clear references to Mark and Luke; and in the works of the latter, who was bishop of Antioch, the sixth in succession from the apostles, evident allusions to Matthew and John, and probable allusions to Luke; (which, considering the nature of the compositions, that they were addressed to heathen readers, is as much as could be expected;) observing also, that the works of two learned Christian writers of the same age, Miltiades and Pantænus<sup>b</sup>, are now lost; of which Miltiades, Eusebius records, that his writings “were monuments of zeal for the Divine Oracles;” and which Pantænus, as Jerome testifies, was a man of prudence and learning, both in the Divine Scriptures and secular literature, and had left many commentaries upon the Holy Scriptures then extant; passing by these without further remark, we come to one of the most voluminous of ancient Christian writers, Clement of Alexandria<sup>c</sup>. Clement followed Irenæus at the distance of only sixteen years, and therefore may be said to maintain the series of testimony in an uninterrupted continuation.

In certain of Clement’s works, now lost, but of which various parts are recited by Eusebius, there is given a distinct account of the order in which the four Gospels were written. The Gospels which contain the genealogies were (he says) written first; Mark’s next, at the instance of Peter’s followers; and John’s the last: and this account he tells us that he had received from presbyters of more ancient times. This testimony proves the following points; that these Gospels were the histories of Christ then publicly received and relied upon; and that the dates, occasions, and circumstances, of their publication were at that time subjects of attention and inquiry amongst Christians. In the works of Clement which remain, the four Gospels are repeatedly quoted by the names of their authors, and the Acts of the Apostles is expressly ascribed to Luke. In one place, after mentioning a particular circumstance, he adds these remarkable words: “We have not this passage *in the four Gospels delivered to us*, but in that according to the Egyptians;” which puts a marked distinction between the four Gospels and all other histories, or pretended histories, of Christ. In another part of his works,

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. i. p. 400. — Ib. 422.    <sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. i. p. 413. 450.    <sup>c</sup> Ib. vol. ii. p. 469.



the perfect confidence with which he received the Gospels, is signified by him in these words: "That this is true, appears from hence, that it is written in the Gospel according to Saint Luke;" and again, "I need not use many words, but only to allege the evangelic voice of the Lord." His quotations are numerous. The sayings of Christ, of which he alleges many, are all taken from our Gospels; the single exception to this observation appearing to be a loose<sup>a</sup> quotation of a passage in Saint Matthew's Gospel.

XII. In the age in which they lived<sup>b</sup>, Tertullian joins on with Clement. The number of the Gospels then received, the names of the evangelists, and their proper descriptions, are exhibited by this writer in one short sentence:—"Among the *apostles* John and Matthew teach us the faith; among *apostolical men*, Luke and Mark refresh it." The next passage to be taken from Tertullian, affords as complete an attestation to the authenticity of our books, as can be well imagined. After enumerating the churches which had been founded by Paul, at Corinth, in Galatia, at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Ephesus; the church of Rome established by Peter and Paul, and other churches derived from John; he proceeds thus:—"I say, then, that with them, but not with them only which are apostolical, but with all who have fellowship with them in the same faith, is that Gospel of Luke received from its first publication, which we so zealously maintain:" and presently afterwards adds; "The same authority of the apostolical churches will support the other Gospels, which we have from them and according to them, I mean John's and Matthew's; although that likewise which Mark published may be said to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was." In another place Tertullian affirms, that the three other Gospels were in the hands of the churches from the beginning, as well as Luke's. This noble testimony fixes the universality with which the Gospels were received, and their antiquity; that they were in the hands of all, and had been so from the first. And this evidence appears not more than one hundred and fifty years after the publication of

<sup>a</sup> "Ask great things, and the small shall be added unto you." Clement rather chose to expound the words of Matthew (chap. vi. 33), than literally to cite them; and this is most undeniably proved by another place in the same Clement, where he both produces the text and these words as an exposition:—"Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, for these are the great things: but the small things, and things relating to this life, shall be added unto you." Jones's *New and Full Method*, vol. i. p. 553.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, vol. ii. p. 561.

the books. The reader must be given to understand that, when Tertullian speaks of maintaining or defending (*tuendi*) the Gospel of Saint Luke, he only means maintaining or defending the integrity of the copies of Luke received by Christian churches, in opposition to certain curtailed copies used by Marcion, against whom he writes.

This author frequently cites the Acts of the Apostles under that title, once calls it Luke's Commentary, and observes how Saint Paul's epistles confirm it.

After this general evidence, it is unnecessary to add particular quotations. These, however, are so numerous and ample, as to have led Dr. Lardner to observe, "that there are more, and larger quotations of the small volume of the New Testament in this one Christian author, than there are of all the works of Cicero in writers of all characters for several ages."<sup>a</sup>

Tertullian quotes no Christian writing as of equal authority with the Scriptures, and no spurious books at all; a broad line of distinction, we may once more observe, between our sacred books and all others.

We may again likewise remark the wide extent through which the reputation of the Gospels, and of the Acts of the Apostles, had spread, and the perfect consent, in this point, of distant and independent societies. It is now only about one hundred and fifty years since Christ was crucified; and within this period, to say nothing of the apostolical fathers who have been noticed already, we have Justin Martyr at Neapolis, Theophilus at Antioch, Irenæus in France, Clement at Alexandria, Tertullian at Carthage, quoting the same books of historical Scriptures, and, I may say, quoting these alone.

XIII. An interval of only thirty years, and that occupied by no small number of Christian writers<sup>b</sup>, whose works only remain in fragments and quotations, and in every one of which is some reference or other to the Gospels, (and in one of them, Hippolytus, as preserved in Theodoret, is an abstract of the whole Gospel history,) brings us to a name of great celebrity in Christian antiquity, Origen<sup>c</sup> of Alexandria, who, in the quantity of his writings, exceeded the most laborious of the Greek and Latin authors. Nothing can be more peremptory upon the

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. ii. p. 647.

<sup>b</sup> Minucius Felix, Apollonius, Caius, Asterius, Urbanus, Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, Hippolytus, Ammonius Julius Africanus.

<sup>c</sup> Lardner, vol. iii. p. 234.

subject now under consideration, and, from a writer of his learning and information, more satisfactory, than the declaration of Origen, preserved, in an extract from his works, by Eusebius; "That the four Gospels alone are received without dispute by the whole church of God under heaven:" to which declaration is immediately subjoined a brief history of the respective authors to whom they were then, as they are now, ascribed. The language holden concerning the Gospels, throughout the works of Origen which remain, entirely corresponds with the testimony here cited. His attestation to the Acts of the Apostles is no less positive: "And Luke also once more sounds the trumpet, relating the acts of the apostles." The universality with which the Scriptures were then read, is well signified by this writer, in a passage in which he has occasion to observe against Celsus, "That it is not in any private books, or such as are read by a few only, and those studious persons, but in books read by every body, That it is written, The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by things that are made." It is to no purpose to single out quotations of Scripture from such a writer as this. We might as well make a selection of the quotations of Scripture in Dr. Clarke's Sermons. They are so thickly sown in the works of Origen, that Dr. Mill says, "If we had all his works remaining, we should have before us almost the whole text of the Bible."<sup>a</sup>

Origen notices, in order to censure, certain apocryphal Gospels. He also uses four writings of this sort; that is, throughout his large works he once or twice, at the most, quotes each of the four; but always with some mark, either of direct reprobation or of caution to his readers, manifestly esteeming them of little or no authority.

XIV. Gregory, bishop of Neocæsarea, and Dionysius of Alexandria, were scholars of Origen. Their testimony, therefore, though full and particular, may be reckoned a repetition only of his. The series, however, of evidence, is continued by Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who flourished within twenty years after Origen. "The church," says this father, "is watered, like Paradise, by four rivers, that is, by four Gospels." The Acts of the Apostles is also frequently quoted by Cyprian under that name, and under the name of the "Divine Scriptures." In his various writings are such constant and copious

<sup>a</sup> Mill, Proleg. cap. vi. p. 66.



citations of Scripture, as to place this part of the testimony beyond controversy. Nor is there, in the works of this eminent African bishop, one quotation of a spurious or apocryphal Christian writing.

XV. Passing over a crowd<sup>a</sup> of writers following Cyprian at different distances, but all within forty years of his time; and who all, in the imperfect remains of their works, either cite the historical Scriptures of the New Testament, or speak of them in terms of profound respect; I single out Victorin, bishop of Pettaw in Germany, merely on account of the remoteness of his situation from that of Origen and Cyprian, who were Africans; by which circumstance his testimony, taken in conjunction with theirs, proves that the Scripture histories, and the same histories, were known and received from one side of the Christian world to the other. This bishop<sup>b</sup> lived about the year 290: and in a commentary upon this text of the Revelation, "The first was like a lion, the second was like a calf, the third like a man, and the fourth like a flying eagle," he makes out that by the four creatures are intended the four Gospels; and, to show the propriety of the symbols, he recites the subject with which each evangelist opens his history. The explication is fanciful, but the testimony positive. He also expressly cites the Acts of the Apostles.

XVI. Arnobius and Lactantius<sup>c</sup>, about the year 300, composed formal arguments upon the credibility of the Christian religion. As these arguments were addressed to Gentiles, the authors abstain from quoting Christian books *by name*; one of them giving this very reason for his reserve; but when they come to state, for the information of their readers, the outlines of Christ's history, it is apparent that they draw their accounts from our Gospels, and from no other sources; for these statements exhibit a summary of almost every thing which is related of Christ's actions and miracles by the four evangelists. Arnobius vindicates, without mentioning their names, the credit of these historians; observing, that they were eye-witnesses of the facts which they relate, and that their ignorance of the arts of composition was rather a confirmation of their testimony, than an objection to it. Lactantius also argues in defence of the religion, from the consistency, simplicity, disinterestedness, and

<sup>a</sup> Novatus, Rome, A.D. 251; Dionysius, Rome, A.D. 259; Commodian, A.D. 270; Anatolius, Laodicea, A.D. 270; Theognostus, A.D. 282; Methodius, Lycia, A.D. 290; Phileas, Egypt, A.D. 296.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, vol. v. p. 214.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. vol. viii. p. 43. 201.

sufferings of the Christian historians, meaning by that term our evangelists.

XVII. We close the series of testimonies with that of Eusebius<sup>a</sup>, bishop of Cæsarea, who flourished in the year 315, contemporary with, or posterior only by fifteen years to, the authors last cited. This voluminous writer, and most diligent collector of the writings of others, beside a variety of large works, composed a history of the affairs of Christianity from its origin to his own time. His testimony to the Scriptures is the testimony of a man much conversant in the works of Christian authors, written during the first three centuries of its æra, and who had read many which are now lost. In a passage of his *Evangelical Demonstration*, Eusebius remarks, with great nicety, the delicacy of two of the evangelists, in their manner of noticing any circumstance which regarded themselves; and of Mark, as writing under Peter's direction, in the circumstances which regarded him. The illustration of this remark leads him to bring together long quotations from each of the evangelists; and the whole passage is a proof, that Eusebius, and the Christians of those days, not only read the Gospels, but studied them with attention and exactness. In a passage of his *ecclesiastical History*, he treats, in form, and at large, of the occasions of writing the four Gospels, and of the order in which they were written. The title of the chapter is, "Of the Order of the Gospels;" and it begins thus: "Let us observe the writings of this apostle John, which are not contradicted by any: and, first of all, must be mentioned, as acknowledged by all, the Gospel according to him, well known to all the churches under heaven; and that it has been justly placed by the ancients the fourth in order, and after the other three, may be made evident in this manner."—Eusebius then proceeds to show that John wrote the last of the four, and that his Gospel was intended to supply the omissions of the others; especially in the part of our Lord's ministry, which took place before the imprisonment of John the Baptist. He observes, "that the apostles of Christ were not studious of the ornaments of composition, nor indeed forward to write at all, being wholly occupied with their ministry."

This learned author makes no use at all of Christian writings, forged with the names of Christ's apostles, or their companions.

We close this branch of our evidence here, because, after

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. viii. p. 33.

Eusebius, there is no room for any question upon the subject; the works of Christian writers being as full of texts of Scripture, and of references to Scripture, as the discourses of modern divines. Future testimonies to the books of Scripture could only prove that they never lost their character or authority.

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## SECTION II.

*When the Scriptures are quoted, or alluded to, they are quoted with peculiar respect, as books sui generis; as possessing an authority which belonged to no other books, and as conclusive in all questions and controversies amongst Christians.*

BESIDE the general strain of reference and quotation, which uniformly and strongly indicates this distinction, the following may be regarded as specific testimonies:

I. Theophilus<sup>a</sup>, bishop of Antioch, the sixth in succession from the apostles, and who flourished little more than a century after the books of the New Testament were written, having occasion to quote one of our Gospels, writes thus: "These things the Holy Scriptures teach us, and all who were moved by the Holy Spirit, among whom John says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." Again: "Concerning the righteousness which the law teaches, the like things are to be found in the prophets and the *Gospels*, because that all, being inspired, spoke by one and the same Spirit of God."<sup>b</sup> No words can testify more strongly than these do, the high and peculiar respect in which these books were holden.

II. A writer against Artemon<sup>c</sup>, who may be supposed to come about one hundred and fifty-eight years after the publication of the Scripture, in a passage quoted by Eusebius, uses these expressions: "Possibly what they (our adversaries) say, might have been credited, *if first of all* the Divine Scriptures did not contradict them; *and then* the writings of certain brethren more ancient than the times of Victor." The brethren mentioned by name, are Justin, Miltiades, Tatian, Clement, Irenæus, Melito, with a general appeal to many more not named. This passage proves, first, that there was at that time a collection called *Di-*

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. part ii. vol. i. p. 429.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. p. 448.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. vol. iii. p. 40.



*vine Scriptures*; secondly, that these Scriptures were esteemed of higher authority than the writings of the most early and celebrated Christians.

III. In a piece ascribed to Hippolytus<sup>a</sup>, who lived near the same time the author professes, in giving his correspondent instruction in the things about which he inquires, “to draw out of the *sacred fountain*, and to set before him from the Sacred Scriptures, what may afford him satisfaction.” He then quotes immediately Paul’s epistles to Timothy, and afterwards many books of the New Testament. This preface to the quotations carries in it a marked distinction between the Scriptures and other books.

IV. “*Our* assertions and discourses,” saith Origen<sup>b</sup>, “are unworthy of credit; we must receive the *Scriptures* as witnesses.” After treating of the duty of prayer, he proceeds with his argument thus: “What we have said, may be proved from the Divine Scriptures.” In his books against Celsus, we find this passage: “That our religion teaches us to seek after wisdom, shall be shown, both out of the ancient Jewish Scriptures, which we also use, and out of those written since Jesus, which are believed in the churches to be divine.” These expressions afford abundant evidence of the peculiar and exclusive authority which the Scriptures possessed.

V. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage<sup>c</sup>, whose age lies close to that of Origen, earnestly exhorts Christian teachers, in all doubtful cases, “to go back to the *fountain*; and, if the truth has in any case been shaken, to recur to the Gospels and apostolic writings.”—“The precepts of the Gospel,” says he in another place, “are nothing less than authoritative divine lessons, the foundations of our hope, the supports of our faith, the guides of our way, the safeguards of our course to heaven.”

VI. Novatus<sup>d</sup>, a Roman, contemporary with Cyprian, appeals to the Scriptures, as the authority by which all errors were to be repelled, and disputes decided. “That Christ is not only man, but God also, is proved by the sacred authority of the Divine Writings.”—“The Divine Scripture easily detects and confutes the frauds of heretics.”—“It is not by the fault of the heavenly Scriptures, which never deceive.” Stronger assertions than these could not be used.

VII. At the distance of twenty years from the writer last ci-

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. iii. p. 112.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. Cred. vol. iv. p. 840.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. p. 287, 288, 289.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. vol. v. p. 102.

ed, Anatolius<sup>a</sup>, a learned Alexandrian, and bishop of Laodicea, speaking of the rule for keeping Easter, a question at that day agitated with much earnestness, says of those whom he opposed, "They can by no means prove their point by the authority of the Divine Scripture."

VIII. The Arians, who sprung up about fifty years after this, argued strenuously against the use of the words consubstantial, and essence, and like phrases; "*because they were not in Scripture.*"<sup>b</sup> And in the same strain one of their advocates opens a conference with Augustine, after the following manner: "If you say what is reasonable, I must submit. If you allege any thing from the Divine Scriptures, which are common to both, I must hear. But unscriptural expressions (*quæ extra Scripturam sunt*) deserve no regard."

Athanasius, the great antagonist of Arianism, after having enumerated the books of the Old and New Testament, adds, "These are the fountain of salvation, that he who thirsts may be satisfied with the oracles contained in them. In these alone the doctrine of salvation is proclaimed. Let no man add to them, or take any thing from them."<sup>c</sup>

IX. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem<sup>d</sup>, who wrote about twenty years after the appearance of Arianism, uses these remarkable words: "Concerning the divine and holy mysteries of faith, not the least article ought to be delivered without the Divine Scriptures." We are assured that Cyril's Scriptures were the same as ours, for he has left us a catalogue of the books included under that name.

X. Epiphanius<sup>e</sup>, twenty years after Cyril, challenges the Arians, and the followers of Origen, "to produce any passage of the Old and New Testament, favouring their sentiments."

XI. Pœbadius, a Gallic bishop, who lived about thirty years after the council of Nice, testifies, that "the bishops of that council first consulted the sacred volumes, and then declared their faith."<sup>f</sup>

XII. Basil, bishop of Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, contemporary with Epiphanius, says, that hearers instructed in the scriptures, ought to examine what is said by their teachers, and to embrace what is agreeable to the Scriptures, and to reject what is otherwise"<sup>g</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. v. p. 146.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. vol. viii. p. 276.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. vii. p. 283, 284.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. p. 314.

<sup>g</sup> Ib. p. 124.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. vol. xii. p. 182.

<sup>f</sup> Ib. vol. ix. p. 52.

XIII. Ephraim, the Syrian, a celebrated writer of the same times, bears this conclusive testimony to the proposition which forms the subject of our present chapter: "The truth written in the Sacred Volume of the Gospel, is a perfect rule. Nothing can be taken from it nor added to it, without great guilt."<sup>a</sup>

XIV. If we add Jerome to these, it is only for the evidence which he affords of the judgement of preceding ages. Jerome observes, concerning the quotations of *ancient* Christian writers, that is, of writers, who were *ancient* in the year 400, that they made a distinction between books; some they quoted as of authority, and others not: which observation relates to the books of Scripture, compared with other writings, apocryphal or heathen<sup>b</sup>.

### SECTION III.

*The Scriptures were in very early times collected into a distinct volume.*

IGNATIUS, who was bishop of Antioch within forty years after the Ascension, and who had lived and conversed with the apostles, speaks of the Gospel and of the apostles in terms which render it very probable that he meant by the Gospel, the book or volume of the Gospels, and by the Apostles, the book or volume of their Epistles. His words in one place are<sup>c</sup>, "Fleeing to the Gospel as the flesh of Jesus, and to the apostles as the presbytery of the church;" that is, as Le Clerc interprets them, "in order to understand the will of God, he fled to the Gospels, which he believed no less than if Christ in the flesh had been speaking to him; and to the writings of the apostles, whom he esteemed as the presbytery of the whole Christian church." It must be observed, that about eighty years after this, we have direct proof, in the writings of Clement of Alexandria<sup>d</sup>, that these two names, "Gospel," and "Apostles," were the names by which the writings of the New Testament, and the division of these writings, were usually expressed.

Another passage from Ignatius is the following:—"But the Gospel has somewhat in it more excellent, the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, his passion and resurrection."<sup>e</sup>

And a third: "Ye ought to hearken to the Prophets, but

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. ix. p. 202.    <sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. x. p. 123, 124.    <sup>c</sup> Ib. part ii. vol. i. p. 180.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. vol. ii. p. 516.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. p. 182.



especially to the Gospel, in which the passion has been manifested to us, and the resurrection perfected." In this last passage, the Prophets and the Gospel are put in conjunction; and as Ignatius undoubtedly meant by the Prophets a collection of writings, it is probable that he meant the same by the Gospel, the two terms standing in evident parallelism with each other.

This interpretation of the word "Gospel," in the passages above quoted from Ignatius, is confirmed by a piece of nearly equal antiquity, the relation of the martyrdom of Polycarp by the church of Smyrna. "All things," say they, "that went before, were done, that the Lord might show us a martyrdom according to the Gospel, for he expected to be delivered up as the Lord also did."<sup>a</sup> And in another place, "We do not commend those who offer themselves, forasmuch as the Gospel teaches us no such thing."<sup>b</sup> In both these places, what is called the *Gospel*, seems to be the history of Jesus Christ, and of his doctrine.

If this be the true sense of the passages, they are not only evidences of our proposition, but strong and very ancient proofs of the high esteem in which the books of the New Testament were holden.

II. Eusebius relates, that Quadratus and some others, who were the immediate successors of the apostles, travelling abroad to preach Christ, carried the Gospels with them, and delivered them to their converts. The words of Eusebius are: "Then travelling abroad, they performed the work of evangelists, being ambitious to preach Christ, and *deliver the Scripture of the divine Gospels*."<sup>c</sup> Eusebius had before him the writings both of Quadratus himself, and of many others of that age, which are now lost. It is reasonable, therefore, to believe, that he had good grounds for his assertion. What is thus recorded of the Gospels, took place within sixty, or at the most, seventy years after they were published: and it is evident that they must, before this time (and, it is probable, long before this time) have been in general use, and in high esteem in the churches planted by the apostles, inasmuch as they were now, we find, collected into a volume; and the immediate successors of the apostles, they who preached the religion of Christ to those who had not already heard it, carried the volume with them, and delivered it to their converts.

III. Irenæus, in the year 178<sup>d</sup>, puts the evangelic and apos-

<sup>a</sup> Ignat. Ep. c. i.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. c. iv.

<sup>c</sup> Lardner, Cred. part ii. vol. i. p. 236.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. p. 333.

tolitic writings in connexion with the Law and the Prophets, manifestly intending by the one a code or collection of Christian sacred writings, as the other expressed the code or collection of Jewish sacred writings. And,

IV. Melito, at this time bishop of Sardis, writing to one Onesimus, tells his correspondent<sup>a</sup>, that he had procured an accurate account of the books of the Old Testament. The occurrence, in this passage, of the term *Old Testament*, has been brought to prove, and it certainly does prove, that there was then a volume or collection of writings called the *New Testament*.

V. In the time of Clement of Alexandria, about fifteen years after the last quoted testimony, it is apparent that the Christian Scriptures were divided into two parts, under the general titles of the Gospels and Apostles; and that both these were regarded as of the highest authority. One out of many expressions of Clement, alluding to this distribution, is the following: "There is a consent and harmony between the Law and the Prophets, the Apostles and the Gospel."<sup>b</sup>

VI. The same division, "Prophets, Gospels, and Apostles," appears in Tertullian<sup>c</sup>, the contemporary of Clement. The collection of the Gospels is likewise called by this writer the "Evangelic Instrument;"<sup>d</sup> the whole volume the "New Testament;" and the two parts, the "Gospels and Apostles."<sup>e</sup>

VII. From many writers also of the third century, and especially from Cyprian, who lived in the middle of it, it is collected that the Christian Scriptures were divided into two codes or volumes, one called the "Gospels or Scriptures of the Lord," the other, the "Apostles, or Epistles of the Apostles."<sup>f</sup>

VIII. Eusebius, as we have already seen, takes some pains to show, that the Gospel of Saint John had been justly placed by the ancients "the fourth in order, and after the other three."<sup>g</sup> These are the terms of his proposition: and the very introduction of such an argument proves incontestibly, that the four Gospels had been collected into a volume, to the exclusion of every other; that their order in the volume had been adjusted with much consideration; and that this had been done by those who were called ancients in the time of Eusebius.

In the Diocletian persecution, in the year 303, the Scriptures were sought out and burnt<sup>h</sup>: many suffered death rather than

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 331.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. ii. p. 516.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. p. 631.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. p. 574.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. p. 632.

<sup>f</sup> Ib. vol. iv. p. 846.

<sup>g</sup> Ib. vol. viii. p. 90.

<sup>h</sup> Ib. vol. vii. p. 214, et seq.

deliver them up ; and those who betrayed them to the persecutors were accounted as lapsed and apostate. On the other hand, Constantine, after his conversion, gave directions for multiplying copies of the Divine Oracles, and for magnificently adorning them at the expense of the imperial treasury<sup>a</sup>. What the Christians of that age so richly embellished in their prosperity, and, which is more, so tenaciously preserved under persecution, was the very volume of the New Testament which we now read.

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#### SECTION IV.

*Our present Sacred Writings were soon distinguished by appropriate names and titles of respect.*

POLYCARP. "I trust that ye are well exercised in the *Holy Scriptures* ;—as in these Scriptures it is said, Be ye angry and sin not, and let not the sun go down upon your wrath."<sup>b</sup> This passage is extremely important ; because it proves that, in the time of Polycarp, who had lived with the apostles, there were Christian writings distinguished by the name of "*Holy Scriptures*," or *Sacred Writings*. Moreover, the text quoted by Polycarp is a text found in the collection at this day. What also the same Polycarp hath elsewhere quoted in the same manner, may be considered as proved to belong to the collection ; and this comprehends Saint Matthew's, and, probably, Saint Luke's Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles, ten epistles of Paul, the First Epistle of Peter, and the First of John<sup>c</sup>. In another place, Polycarp has these words : "*Whoever perverts the Oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says there is neither resurrection nor judgement, he is the firstborn of Satan.*"<sup>d</sup>—It does not appear what else Polycarp could mean by the "*Oracles of the Lord*," but those same "*Holy Scriptures*," or *Sacred Writings*, of which he had spoken before.

II. Justin Martyr, whose apology was written about thirty years after Polycarp's epistle, expressly cites some of our present histories under the title of *GOSPEL*, and that not as a name by him first ascribed to them, but as the name by which they were generally known in his time. His words are these :—"For

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. vii. p. 432.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. i. p. 203.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. p. 223.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. p. 222.



the apostles in the memoirs composed by them, *which are called Gospels*, have thus delivered it, that Jesus commanded them to take bread, and give thanks.”<sup>a</sup> There exists no doubt, but that, by the memoirs above mentioned, Justin meant our present historical Scriptures; for throughout his works, he quotes these, and no others.

III. Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, who came thirty years after Justin, in a passage preserved in Eusebius, (for his works are lost,) speaks “of the Scriptures of the Lord.”<sup>b</sup>

IV. And at the same time, or very nearly so, by Irenæus, bishop of Lyons in France<sup>c</sup>, they are called “Divine Scriptures,” “Divine Oracles,”—“Scriptures of the Lord,”—“Evangelic and Apostolic Writings.”<sup>d</sup> The quotations of Irenæus prove decidedly, that our present Gospels, and these alone, together with the Acts of the Apostles, were the historical books comprehended by him under these appellations.

V. Saint Matthew’s Gospel is quoted by Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, contemporary with Irenæus, under the title of the “Evangelic Voice;”<sup>e</sup> and the copious works of Clement of Alexandria, published within fifteen years of the same time, ascribe to the books of the New Testament the various titles of “Sacred Books,”—“Divine Scriptures,”—“Divinely inspired Scriptures,”—“Scriptures of the Lord,”—“the true Evangelical Canon.”<sup>f</sup>

VI. Tertullian, who joins on with Clement, beside adopting most of the names and epithets above noticed, calls the Gospels “our Digesta,” in allusion, as it should seem, to some collection of Roman laws then extant<sup>g</sup>.

VII. By Origen, who came thirty years after Tertullian, the same, and other no less strong titles, are applied to the Christian Scriptures: and, in addition thereunto, this writer frequently speaks of the “Old and New Testament,”—“the Ancient and New Scriptures,”—“the Ancient and New Oracles.”<sup>h</sup>

VIII. In Cyprian, who was not twenty years later, they are “Books of the Spirit,”—“Divine Fountains,”—“Fountains of the Divine Fulness.”<sup>i</sup>

The expressions we have thus quoted, are evidences of high and peculiar respect. They all occur within two centuries from the publication of the books. Some of them commence with

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 271.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. p. 298.

<sup>c</sup> The reader will observe the remoteness of these two writers in country and situation.

<sup>d</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 343, et seq.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. p. 427.

<sup>f</sup> Ib. vol. ii. p. 515.

<sup>g</sup> Ib. p. 630.

<sup>h</sup> Ib. vol. iii. p. 230.

<sup>i</sup> Ib. vol. iv. p. 844.

the companions of the apostles ; and they increase in number and variety, through a series of writers touching upon one another, and deduced from the first age of the religion.

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## SECTION V.

*Our Scriptures were publicly read and expounded in the religious assemblies of the early Christians.*

JUSTIN Martyr, who wrote in the year 140, which was seventy or eighty years after some, and less, probably, after others of the Gospels were published, giving, in his first apology, an account, to the Emperor, of the Christian worship, has this remarkable passage :

“ The *Memoirs of the Apostles*, or the Writings of the Prophets, are *read* according as the time allows : and, when the reader has ended, the president makes a discourse, exhorting to the imitation of so excellent things.”<sup>a</sup>

A few short observations will show the value of this testimony.

1. The “ *Memoirs of the Apostles*,” Justin in another place expressly tells us, are what are called “ *Gospels* :” and that they were the Gospels which we now use, is made certain by Justin’s numerous quotations of *them*, and his silence about any others.

2. Justin describes the general usage of the Christian church.

3. Justin does not speak of it as recent or newly instituted, but in the terms in which men speak of established customs.

II. Tertullian, who followed Justin at the distance of about fifty years, in his account of the religious assemblies of Christians as they were conducted in his time, says, “ We come together to recollect the Divine Scriptures ; we nourish our faith, raise our hope, confirm our trust, by the Sacred Word.”<sup>b</sup>

III. Eusebius records of Origen, and cites for his authority the letters of bishops contemporary with Origen, that, when he went into Palestine about the year 216, which was only sixteen years after the date of Tertullian’s testimony, he was desired by the bishops of that country to discourse and expound the Scriptures publicly in the church, though he was not yet ordained a presbyter<sup>c</sup>. This anecdote recognizes the usage, not only of read-

<sup>a</sup> Iardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 273.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. ii. p. 628.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. vol. iii. p. 68.

ing, but of expounding the Scriptures; and both as subsisting in full force. Origen also himself bears witness to the same practice: "This," says he, "we do, when the Scriptures are read in the church, and when the discourse for explication is delivered to the people."<sup>a</sup> And, what is a still more ample testimony, many homilies of his upon the Scriptures of the New Testament, delivered by him in the assemblies of the church, are still extant.

IV. Cyprian, whose age was not twenty years lower than that of Origen, gives his people an account of having ordained two persons, who were before confessors, to be readers; and what they were to read, appears by the reason which he gives for his choice: "Nothing," says Cyprian, "can be more fit, than that he, who has made a glorious confession of the Lord, should read publicly in the church; that he who has shown himself willing to die a martyr, should read the *Gospel of Christ* by which martyrs are made."<sup>b</sup>

V. Intimations of the same custom may be traced in a great number of writers in the beginning and throughout the whole of the fourth century. Of these testimonies I will only use one, as being, of itself, express and full. Augustine, who appeared near the conclusion of the century, displays the benefit of the Christian religion on this very account, the public reading of the Scriptures in the churches, "where," says he, "is a confluence of all sorts of people of both sexes; and where they hear how they ought to live well in this world, that they may deserve to live happily and eternally in another." And this custom he declares to be universal: "The canonical books of Scripture being read every where, the miracles therein recorded are well known to all people."<sup>c</sup>

It does not appear that any books, other than our present Scriptures, were thus publicly read, except that the epistle of Clement was read in the church of Corinth, to which it had been addressed, and in some others; and that the Shepherd of Hermas was read in many churches. Nor does it subtract much from the value of the argument, that these two writings partly come within it, because we allow them to be the genuine writings of apostolical men. There is not the least evidence, that any other Gospel, than the four which we receive, was ever admitted to this distinction.

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. iii. p. 302. <sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. iv. p. 842. <sup>c</sup> Ib. vol. x. p. 276 et seq.



## SECTION VI.

*Commentaries were anciently written upon the Scriptures; harmonies formed out of them; different copies carefully collated; and versions made of them into different languages.*

No greater proof can be given of the esteem in which these books were holden by the ancient Christians, or of the sense then entertained of their value and importance, than the industry bestowed upon them. And it ought to be observed, that the value and importance of these books consisted entirely in their genuineness and truth. There was nothing in them, as works of taste, or as compositions, which could have induced any one to have written a note upon them. Moreover it shows that they were even *then* considered as ancient books. Men do not write comments upon publications of their own times: therefore the testimonies cited under this head, afford an evidence which carries up the evangelic writings much beyond the age of the testimonies themselves, and to that of their reputed authors.

I. Tatian, a follower of Justin Martyr, and who flourished about the year 170, composed a harmony, or collation of the Gospels, which he called *Diatessaron*, of the four<sup>a</sup>. The title as well as the work, is remarkable; because it shows that then as now, there were four, and only four, Gospels in general use with Christians. And this was little more than a hundred years after the publication of some of them.

II. Pantænus, of the Alexandrian school, a man of great reputation and learning, who came twenty years after Tatian, wrote many commentaries upon the Holy Scriptures, which, as Jerome testifies, were extant in his time<sup>b</sup>.

III. Clement of Alexandria wrote short explications of many books of the Old and New Testament<sup>c</sup>.

IV. Tertullian appeals from the authority of a later version, then in use, to the authentic Greek<sup>d</sup>.

V. An anonymous author, quoted by Eusebius, and who appears to have written about the year 212, appeals to the *ancient copies* of the Scriptures, in refutation of some corrupt readings alleged by the followers of Artemon<sup>e</sup>.

VI. The same Eusebius, mentioning by name several writers

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. i. p. 307.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. p. 638.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. p. 455.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. vol. iii. p. 46.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. vol. ii. p. 462.

of the church who lived at this time, and concerning whom he says, "There still remain divers monuments of the laudable industry of those ancient and ecclesiastical men," (*i. e.* of Christian writers who were considered as ancient in the year 300,) adds, "There are, besides, treatises of many others, whose names we have not been able to learn, orthodox and ecclesiastical men, as the interpretations of the Divine Scriptures given by each of them show."<sup>a</sup>

VII. The last five testimonies may be referred to the year 200; immediately after which, a period of thirty years gives us

Julius Africanus, who wrote an epistle upon the apparent difference in the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, which he endeavours to reconcile by the distinction of natural and legal descent, and conducts his hypothesis with great industry through the whole series of generations<sup>b</sup>.

Ammonius, a learned Alexandrian, who composed, as Tatian had done, a harmony of *the four Gospels*; which proves, as Tatian's work did, that there were four Gospels, and no more, at this time in use in the church. It affords also an instance of the zeal of Christians for those writings, and of their solicitude about them<sup>c</sup>.

And, above both these, Origen, who wrote commentaries, or homilies, upon most of the books included in the New Testament, and upon no other books but these. In particular, he wrote upon Saint John's Gospel, very largely upon Saint Matthew's, and commentaries, or homilies, upon the Acts of the Apostles<sup>d</sup>.

VIII. In addition to these, the third century likewise contains

Dionysius of Alexandria, a very learned man, who compared, with great accuracy, the accounts in the four Gospels of the time of Christ's resurrection, adding a reflection which showed his opinion of their authority: "Let us not think that the evangelists disagree, or contradict each other, although there be some small difference; but let us honestly and faithfully endeavour to reconcile what we read"<sup>e</sup>.

Victorin, bishop of Pettaw, in Germany, who wrote comments upon Saint Matthew's Gospel<sup>f</sup>.

Lucian, a presbyter of Antioch; and Hesychius, an Egyptian bishop, who put forth editions of the New Testament.

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. ii. p. 551.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. iii. p. 170.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. p. 122.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. p. 352 192. 202. 245.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. vol. iv. p. 166.

<sup>f</sup> Ib. p. 195.

IX. The fourth century supplies a catalogue<sup>a</sup> of fourteen writers, who expended their labours upon the books of the New Testament, and whose works or names are come down to our times; amongst which number it may be sufficient, for the purpose of showing the sentiments and studies of learned Christians of that age, to notice the following:

Eusebius, in the very beginning of the century, wrote expressly upon the discrepancies observable in the Gospels, and likewise a treatise, in which he pointed out what things are related by four, what by three, what by two, and what by one evangelist<sup>b</sup>. This author also testifies what is certainly a material piece of evidence, "that the writings of the apostles had obtained such an esteem, as to be translated into every language both of Greeks and Barbarians, and to be diligently studied by all nations."<sup>c</sup> This testimony was given about the year 300; how long *before* that date these translations were made, does not appear.

Damasus, bishop of Rome, corresponded with Saint Jerome upon the exposition of difficult texts of Scripture; and, in a letter still remaining, desires Jerome to give him a clear explanation of the word *Hosanna*, found in the New Testament; "he (Damasus) having met with very different interpretations of it in the Greek and Latin commentaries of Catholic writers which he had read."<sup>d</sup> This last clause shows the number and variety of commentaries then extant.

Gregory of Nyssen, at one time, appeals to the most exact copies of Saint Mark's Gospel; at another time, compares together, and proposes to reconcile, the several accounts of the Resurrection *given by the four Evangelists*; which limitation proves, that there were no other histories of Christ deemed authentic beside these, or included in the same character with these. This writer observes, acutely enough, that the disposition of the clothes in the sepulchre, the napkin that was about our Saviour's head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself, did not bespeak the terror and

<sup>a</sup> Eusebius, . . . . . A.D.	315	Didimus of Alex. . . . .	370
Juvencus, Spain, . . . . .	330	Ambrose of Milan, . . . . .	374
Theodore, Thrace, . . . . .	334	Diodore of Tarsus, . . . . .	378
Hilary, Poitiers, . . . . .	354	Gaudent. of Brescia, . . . . .	387
Fortunatus, . . . . .	340	Theodore of Cilicia, . . . . .	394
Apollinarius of Laodicea, . . . . .	362	Jerome, . . . . .	392
Damasus, Rome, . . . . .	366	Chrysostom, . . . . .	398
Gregory, Nyssen, . . . . .	371		

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. viii. p. 46.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. p. 201.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. vol. ix. p. 108.



hurry of thieves, and therefore refutes the story of the body being stolen<sup>a</sup>.

Ambrose, bishop of Milan, remarked various readings in the Latin copies of the New Testament, and appeals to the original Greek ;

And Jerome, towards the conclusion of this century, put forth an edition of the New Testament in Latin, corrected, at least as to the Gospels, by Greek copies, "and those (he says) ancient."

Lastly, Chrysostom, it is well known, delivered and published a great many homilies, or sermons, upon the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

It is needless to bring down this article lower ; but it is of importance to add, that there is no example of Christian writers of the first three centuries composing comments upon any other books than those which are found in the New Testament, except the single one of Clement of Alexandria commenting upon a book called the Revelation of Peter.

Of the *ancient versions* of the New Testament, one of the most valuable is the Syriac. Syriac was the language of Palestine when Christianity was there first established. And although the books of Scripture were written in Greek, for the purpose of a more extended circulation than within the precincts of Judea, yet it is probable that they would soon be translated into the vulgar language of the country where the religion first prevailed. Accordingly, a Syriac translation is now extant, all along, so far as it appears, used by the inhabitants of Syria, bearing many internal marks of high antiquity, supported in its pretensions by the uniform tradition of the East, and confirmed by the discovery of many very ancient manuscripts in the libraries of Europe. It is about 200 years since a bishop of Antioch sent a copy of this translation into Europe, to be printed ; and this seems to be the first time that the translation became generally known to these parts of the world. The bishop of Antioch's Testament was found to contain all our books, except the second epistle of Peter, the second and third of John, and the Revelation ; which books, however, have since been discovered in that language in some ancient manuscripts of Europe. But in this collection, no other book, besides what is in ours, appears ever to have had a place. And, which is very worthy of observation, the text, though preserved in a remote country, and without

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. ix. p. 163.

communication with ours, differs from ours very little, and in nothing that is important<sup>a</sup>.

## SECTION VII.

*Our Scriptures were received by ancient Christians of different sects and persuasions, by many Heretics as well as Catholics, and were usually appealed to by both sides in the controversies which arose in those days.*

THE three most ancient topics of controversy amongst Christians were, the authority of the Jewish constitution, the origin of evil, and the nature of Christ. Upon the first of these we find, in very early times, one class of heretics rejecting the Old Testament entirely; another contending for the obligation of its law, in all its parts, throughout its whole extent, and over every one who sought acceptance with God. Upon the two latter subjects, a natural, perhaps, and venial, but a fruitless, eager, and impatient curiosity, prompted by the philosophy and by the scholastic habits of the age, which carried men much into bold hypotheses and conjectural solutions, raised, amongst some who professed Christianity, very wild and unfounded opinions. I think there is no reason to believe that the number of these bore any considerable proportion to the body of the Christian church; and amidst the disputes which such opinions necessarily occasioned, it is a great satisfaction to perceive, what, in a plurality of instances, we do perceive, all sides recurring to the same Scriptures.

<sup>b</sup> I. Basilides lived near the age of the apostles, about the year 120, or, perhaps, sooner<sup>c</sup>. He rejected the Jewish institution, not as spurious, but as proceeding from a being inferior to the true God; and in other respects advanced a scheme of theology widely different from the general doctrine of the Christian church, and which, as it gained over some disciples, was warmly opposed by Christian writers of the second and third century. In these writings, there is positive evidence that Basilides received the Gospel of Matthew; and there is no sufficient proof that he rejected any of the other three: on the contrary, it appears that he wrote a commentary upon the Gospel, so copious as to be divided into twenty-four books<sup>d</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Jones on the Canon, vol. i. c. 14.

<sup>b</sup> The materials of the former part of this section are taken from Dr. Lardner's History of the Heretics of the first two Centuries, published since his death, with additions, by the Rev. Mr. Hogg, of Exeter, and inserted into the ninth volume of his works, of the edition of 1778.

<sup>c</sup> Lardner, vol. ix. p. 271.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. vol. ix. ed. 1783, p. 305, 306.

II. The Valentinians appeared about the same time<sup>a</sup>. Their heresy consisted in certain notions concerning angelic natures, which can hardly be rendered intelligible to a modern reader. They seem, however, to have acquired as much importance as any of the separatists of that early age. Of this sect, Irenæus, who wrote A.D. 172, expressly records that they endeavoured to fetch arguments for their opinions from the evangelic and apostolic writings<sup>b</sup>. Heracleon, one of the most celebrated of the sect, and who lived probably so early as the year 125, wrote commentaries upon Luke and John<sup>c</sup>. Some observations also of his upon Matthew are preserved by Origen<sup>d</sup>. Nor is there any reason to doubt that he received the whole New Testament.

III. The Carpocratians were also an early heresy, little, if at all, later than the two preceding<sup>e</sup>. Some of their opinions resembled what we at this day mean by Socinianism. With respect to the Scriptures, they are specifically charged, by Irenæus and by Epiphanius, with endeavouring to pervert a passage in Matthew, which amounts to a positive proof that they received that Gospel<sup>f</sup>. Negatively, they are not accused, by their adversaries, of rejecting any part of the New Testament.

IV. The Sethians, A.D. 150<sup>g</sup>; the Montanists, A.D. 156<sup>h</sup>; the Marcosians, A.D. 160<sup>i</sup>; Hermogenes, A.D. 180<sup>k</sup>; Praxias, A.D. 196<sup>l</sup>; Artemon, A.D. 200<sup>m</sup>; Theodotus, A.D. 200; all included under the denomination of heretics, and all engaged in controversies with Catholic Christians, received the Scriptures of the New Testament.

V. Tatian, who lived in the year 172, went into many extravagant opinions, was the founder of a sect called Encratites, and was deeply involved in disputes with the Christians of that age; yet Tatian so received the four Gospels, as to compose a harmony from them.

VI. From a writer, quoted by Eusebius, of about the year 200, it is apparent that they who at that time contended for the mere humanity of Christ, argued from the Scriptures; for they are accused by this writer of making alterations in their copies in order to favour their opinions<sup>n</sup>.

VII. Origen's sentiments excited great controversies,—the

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. ix. ed. 1788, p. 350, 351.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. i. p. 383.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. vol. ix. ed. 1788, p. 352.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. p. 353.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. p. 309.

<sup>f</sup> Ib. p. 318.

<sup>g</sup> Ib. p. 455.

<sup>h</sup> Ib. p. 482.

<sup>i</sup> Ib. p. 348.

<sup>k</sup> Ib. p. 473.

<sup>l</sup> Ib. p. 433.

<sup>m</sup> Ib. vol. ix. ed. 1778, p. 466.

<sup>n</sup> Ib. vol. iii. p. 46.



bishops of Rome and Alexandria, and many others, condemning, the bishops of the East espousing them; yet there is not the smallest question, but that both the advocates and adversaries of these opinions acknowledged the same authority of Scripture. In his time, which the reader will remember was about one hundred and fifty years after the Scriptures were published, many dissensions subsisted amongst Christians, with which they were reproached by Celsus; yet Origen, who has recorded this accusation without contradicting it, nevertheless testifies, that the four Gospels were received *without dispute*, by the whole church of God under heaven<sup>a</sup>.

VIII. Paul of Samosata, about thirty years after Origen, so distinguished himself in the controversy concerning the nature of Christ, as to be the subject of two councils or synods, assembled at Antioch, upon his opinions. Yet he is not charged by his adversaries with rejecting any book of the New Testament. On the contrary, Epiphanius, who wrote a history of heretics a hundred years afterwards, says, that Paul endeavoured to support his doctrine by texts of Scripture. And Vincentius Lirinensis, A.D. 434, speaking of Paul and other heretics of the same age, has these words: "Here, perhaps, some one may ask, whether heretics also urge the testimony of Scripture. They urge it, indeed, explicitly and vehemently; for you may see them flying through every book of the sacred law."<sup>b</sup>

IX. A controversy at the same time existed with the Noëtians or Sabellians, who seem to have gone into the opposite extreme from that of Paul of Samosata and his followers. Yet, according to the express testimony of Epiphanius, Sabellius received all the Scriptures. And with both sects Catholic writers constantly allege the Scriptures, and reply to the arguments which their opponents drew from particular texts.

We have here, therefore, a proof, that parties, who were the most opposite and irreconcilable to one another, acknowledged the authority of Scripture with equal deference.

X. And as a general testimony to the same point, may be produced what was said by one of the bishops of the council of Carthage, which was holden a little before this time:—"I am of opinion that blasphemous and wicked heretics, who *pervert* the sacred and adorable words of the Scripture, should be execrated."<sup>c</sup> Undoubtedly what they perverted, they received.

XI. The Millennium, Novatianism, the baptism of heretics,

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. iv. ed. 1738, p. 642.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. xi. p. 158.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. p. 839.

the keeping of Easter, engaged also the attention and divided the opinions of Christians, at and before that time; (and, by the way, it may be observed, that such disputes, though on some accounts to be blamed, showed how much men were in earnest upon the subject;) yet every one appealed for the grounds of his opinion to Scripture authority. Dionysius of Alexandria, who flourished A.D. 247, describing a conference or public disputation, with the Millennarians of Egypt, confesses of them, though their adversary, "that they embrace whatever could be made out by good arguments from the Holy Scriptures."<sup>a</sup> Novatus, A.D. 251, distinguished by some rigid sentiments concerning the reception of those who had lapsed, and the founder of a numerous sect, in his few remaining works quotes the Gospel with the same respect as other Christians did; and concerning his followers, the testimony of Socrates, who wrote about the year 440, is positive, *viz.* "That in the disputes between the Catholics and them, each side endeavoured to support itself by the authority of the Divine Scriptures."<sup>b</sup>

XII. The Donatists, who sprung up in the year 328, used the same Scriptures as we do. "Produce," saith Augustine, "some proof from the Scriptures, whose authority is common to us both."<sup>c</sup>

XIII. It is perfectly notorious, that, in the Arian controversy, which arose soon after the year 300, both sides appealed to the same Scriptures and with equal professions of deference and regard. The Arians, in their council of Antioch, A.D. 341, pronounce, that, "if any one, contrary to the sound doctrine of the Scriptures, say, that the Son is a creature, as one of the creatures, let him be an anathema."<sup>d</sup> They and the Athanasians mutually accuse each other of using *unscriptural* phrases; which was a mutual acknowledgment of the conclusive authority of Scripture.

XIV. The Priscillianists, A.D. 378<sup>e</sup>, the Pelagians, A.D. 405<sup>f</sup>, received the same Scriptures as we do.

XV. The testimony of Chrysostom, who lived near the year 400, is so positive in affirmation of the proposition which we maintain, that it may form a proper conclusion of the argument. "The general reception of the Gospels is a proof that their history is true and consistent; for, since the writing of the Gospels, many heresies have arisen, holding opinions contrary to

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. iv. p. 666.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. v. p. 105.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. vol. vii. p. 243.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. p. 277.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. vol. ix. p. 325.

<sup>f</sup> Ib. vol. xi. p. 52.

what is contained in them, who yet receive the Gospels either entire or in part.”<sup>a</sup> I am not moved by what may seem a deduction from Chrysostom’s testimony, the words, “entire, or in part;” for if all the parts, which were ever questioned in our Gospels, were given up, it would not affect the miraculous origin of the religion in the smallest degree: *e. g.*

Cerinthus is said by Epiphanius to have received the Gospel of Matthew, but not entire. What the omissions were, does not appear. The common opinion, that he rejected the first two chapters, seems to have been a mistake<sup>b</sup>. It is agreed, however, by all who have given any account of Cerinthus, that he taught that the Holy Ghost (whether he meant by that name a person or a power) descended upon Jesus at his baptism; that Jesus from this time performed many miracles, and that he appeared after his death. He must have retained therefore the essential parts of the history.

Of all the ancient heretics, the most extraordinary was Marcion. One of his tenets was the rejection of the Old Testament, as proceeding from an inferior and imperfect deity; and in pursuance of this hypothesis, he erased from the New, and that, as it should seem, without entering into any critical reasons, every passage which recognized the Jewish Scriptures. He spared not a text which contradicted his opinion. It is reasonable to believe that Marcion treated books as he treated texts: yet this rash and wild controversialist published a recension, or chastised edition, of Saint Luke’s Gospel, containing the leading facts, and all which is necessary to authenticate the religion. This example affords proof, that there were always some points, and those the main points, which neither wildness nor rashness, neither the fury of opposition nor the intemperance of controversy, would venture to call in question. There is no reason to believe that Marcion, though full of resentment against the Catholic Christians, ever charged them with forging their books. “The Gospel of Saint Matthew, the Epistle to the Hebrews, with those of Saint Peter and Saint James, as well as the Old Testament in general,” he said, “were writings not for Christians but for Jews.”<sup>d</sup> This declaration shows the ground upon which Marcion proceeded in his mutilation of the

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. x. p. 316.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. vol. ix. ed. 1783, p. 322.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. sect. ii. c. x. Also Michael. vol. i. c. i. sect. xviii.

<sup>d</sup> I have transcribed this sentence from Michaelis (p. 38), who has not, however, referred to the authority, upon which he attributes these words to Marcion.



Scriptures, *viz.* his dislike of the passages or the books. Marcion flourished about the year 130.

Dr. Lardner, in his General Review, sums up this head of evidence in the following words :—"Noëtus, Paul of Samosata, Sabellius, Marcellus, Photinus, the Novatians, Donatists, Manicheans<sup>a</sup>, Priscillianists, beside Artemon, the Audians, the Arians, and divers others, all received most of all the same books of the New Testament which the Catholics received ; and agreed in a like respect for them as written by apostles, or their disciples and companions."<sup>b</sup>

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## SECTION VIII.

*The four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of Saint Paul, the First Epistle of John, and the First of Peter, were received without doubt by those who doubted concerning the other books which are included in our present Canon.*

I STATE this proposition, because, if made out, it shows that the authenticity of their books was a subject amongst the early Christians of consideration and inquiry ; and that, where there was cause of doubt, they did doubt ; a circumstance which strengthens very much their testimony to such books as were received by them with full acquiescence.

I. Jerome, in his account of Caius, who was probably a presbyter of Rome, and who flourished near the year 200, records of him, that, reckoning up only thirteen epistles of Paul, he says the fourteenth, which is inscribed to the Hebrews, is not his : and then Jerome adds, "With the Romans to this day it is not looked upon as Paul's." This agrees in the main with the account given by Eusebius of the same ancient author and his work ; except that Eusebius delivers his own remark in more guarded terms : "And indeed to this very time by *some* of the Romans, this epistle is not thought to be the apostle's."<sup>c</sup>

II. Origen, about twenty years after Caius, quoting the Epistle to the Hebrews, observes that some might dispute the authority of that epistle ; and therefore proceeds to quote to the

<sup>a</sup> This must be with an exception, however, of Faustus, who lived so late as the year 384.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, vol. xii. p. 12.—Dr. Lardner's future inquiries supplied him with many other instances.

<sup>c</sup> Lardner, vol. iii. p. 240.

same point, as *undoubted* books of Scripture, the Gospel of Saint Matthew, the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians." <sup>a</sup> And in another place, this author speaks of the Epistle to the Hebrews thus: "The account come down to us is various; some saying that Clement, who was bishop of Rome, wrote this epistle; others, that it was Luke, the same who wrote the Gospel and the Acts." Speaking also, in the same paragraph, of Peter, "Peter," says he, "has left one epistle, acknowledged; let it be granted likewise that he wrote a second, for it is doubted of." And of John, "He has also left one epistle, of a very few lines; grant also a second and a third, for all do not allow them to be genuine." Now let it be noted, that Origen, who thus discriminates, and thus confesses his own doubts, and the doubts which subsisted in his time, expressly witnesses concerning the four Gospels, "that they alone are received without dispute by the whole church of God under heaven." <sup>b</sup>

III. Dionysius of Alexandria, in the year 247, doubts concerning the Book of Revelation, whether it was written by Saint John; states the grounds of his doubt, represents the diversity of opinion concerning it, in his own time, and before his time <sup>c</sup>. Yet the same Dionysius uses and collates the four Gospels in a manner which shows that he entertained not the smallest suspicion of *their* authority, and in a manner also which shows that they, and they alone, were received as authentic histories of Christ." <sup>d</sup>

IV. But this section may be said to have been framed on purpose to introduce to the reader two remarkable passages extant in Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History. The first passage opens with these words:—"Let us observe the writings of the apostle John which are *uncontradicted*; and first of all must be mentioned, as acknowledged of all, the Gospel according to him, well known to all the churches under heaven." The author then proceeds to relate the occasions of writing the Gospels, and the reasons for placing Saint John's the last, manifestly speaking of all the four as parallel in their authority, and in the certainty of their original <sup>e</sup>. The second passage is taken from a chapter, the title of which is, "Of the Scriptures *universally acknowledged*, and of those that are not such." Eusebius begins his enumeration in the following manner:—"In the first

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. iii. p. 246.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. p. 661.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. p. 234.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. vol. viii. p. 90.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. vol. iv. p. 670.

*place* are to be ranked the sacred four Gospels; then the book of the Acts of the Apostles; after that are to be reckoned the Epistles of Paul. In the next place, that called the First Epistle of John, and the Epistle of Peter, are to be esteemed authentic. After this is to be placed, if it be thought fit, the Revelation of John, about which we shall observe the different opinions at proper seasons. Of the controverted, but yet well known or approved by the most, are, that called the Epistle of James, and that of Jude, and the Second of Peter, and the Second and Third of John, whether they are written by the evangelist, or another of the same name.”<sup>a</sup> He then proceeds to reckon up five others, not in our canon, which he calls in one place *spurious*, in another *controverted*, meaning, as appears to me, nearly the same thing by these two words<sup>b</sup>.

It is manifest from this passage, that the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, (the parts of Scripture with which our concern principally lies,) were acknowledged without dispute, even by those who raised objections, or entertained doubts, about some other parts of the same collection. But the passage proves something more than this. The author was extremely conversant in the writings of Christians, which had been published from the commencement of the institution to his own time: and it was from these writings that he drew his knowledge of the character and reception of the books in question. That Eusebius recurred to this medium of information, and that he had examined with attention this species of proof, is shown first, by a passage in the very chapter we are quoting, in which, speaking of the books which he calls spurious, “None,” he says, “of the ecclesiastical writers, in the succession of the apostles, have vouchsafed to make any mention of them in their writings;” and secondly, by another passage of the same work, wherein, speaking of the First Epistle of Peter, “This,” he says, “the presbyters of ancient times have quoted in their writings as undoubtedly genuine;”<sup>c</sup> and then, speaking of some other writings bearing the name of Peter, “We know,” he says, “that they have not been delivered down to us in the number of Catholic writings, forasmuch as no ecclesiastical writer of the

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. viii. p. 39.

<sup>b</sup> That Eusebius could not intend, by the word rendered “spurious,” what we at present mean by it, is evident from a clause in this very chapter, where, speaking of the Gospels of Peter, and Thomas, and Matthias, and some others, he says, “They are not so much as to be reckoned among the *spurious*, but are to be rejected as altogether absurd and impious.” Vol. viii. p. 98.

<sup>c</sup> Lardner, vol. viii. p. 99.



ancients, or of our times, has made use of testimonies out of them." "But in the progress of this history," the author proceeds, "we shall make it our business to show, together with the successions from the apostles, what ecclesiastical writers, in every age, have used such writings as these which are contradicted, and what they have said with regard to the Scriptures received in the New Testament, *and acknowledged by all*, and with regard to those which are not such."<sup>a</sup>

After this it is reasonable to believe, that when Eusebius states the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, as uncontradicted, uncontested, and acknowledged by all; and when he places them in opposition, not only to those which were spurious, in our sense of that term, but to those which were controverted, and even to those which were well known and approved by many, yet doubted of by some; he represents not only the sense of his own age, but the result of the evidence which the writings of prior ages, from the apostles' time to his own, had furnished to his inquiries. The opinion of Eusebius and his contemporaries appears to have been founded upon the testimony of writers whom they *then* called ancient: and we may observe, that such of the works of these writers as have come down to our times entirely confirm the judgement, and support the distinction which Eusebius proposes. The books which he calls "books universally acknowledged," are in fact used and quoted in the remaining works of Christian writers, during the 250 years between the apostles' time and that of Eusebius, much more frequently than, and in a different manner from, those, the authority of which, he tells us, was disputed.

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## SECTION IX.

*Our historical Scriptures were attacked by the early adversaries of Christianity, as containing the accounts upon which the Religion was founded.*

NEAR the middle of the second century, Celsus, a heathen philosopher, wrote a professed treatise against Christianity. To this treatise, Origen, who came about fifty years after him, published an answer, in which he frequently recites his adversary's

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. viii. p. 111.

words and arguments. The work of Celsus is lost ; but that of Origen remains. Origen appears to have given us the words of Celsus, where he professes to give them, very faithfully, and, amongst other reasons for thinking so, this is one, that the objection, as stated by him from Celsus, is sometimes stronger than his own answer. I think it also probable, that Origen, in his answer, has retailed a large portion of the work of Celsus : "That it may not be suspected," he says, "that we pass by any chapters, because we have no answers at hand, I have thought it best, according to my ability, to confute every thing proposed by him, not so much observing the natural order of things, as the order which he has taken himself."<sup>a</sup>

Celsus wrote about one hundred years after the Gospels were published ; and therefore any notices of these books from him are extremely important for their antiquity. They are, however, rendered more so by the character of the author ; for the reception, credit, and notoriety of these books must have been well established amongst Christians, to have made them subjects of animadversion and opposition by strangers and by enemies. It evinces the truth of what Chrysostom, two centuries afterwards, observed, that "the Gospels, when written, were not hidden in a corner or buried in obscurity, but they were made known to all the world, before enemies as well as others, even as they are now."<sup>b</sup>

1. Celsus, or the Jew whom he personates, uses these words :—"I could say many things concerning the affairs of Jesus, and those, too, different from those written by the disciples of Jesus ; but I purposely omit them."<sup>c</sup> Upon this passage it has been rightly observed, that it is not easy to believe, that if Celsus could have contradicted the disciples upon good evidence in any material point, he would have omitted to do so, and that the assertion is, what Origen calls it, a mere oratorical flourish.

It is sufficient, however, to prove, that, in the time of Celsus, there were books well known, and allowed to be written by the disciples of Jesus, which books contained a history of him. By the term *disciples*, Celsus does not mean the followers of Jesus in general ; for them he calls Christians, or believers, or the like ; but those who had been taught by Jesus himself, *i. e.* his apostles and companions.

2. In another passage, Celsus accuses the Christians of alter-

<sup>a</sup> Orig. cont. Cels. l. i. sect 41.

<sup>b</sup> In Matt. Hom. I. 7.

<sup>c</sup> Lardner, Jewish and Heathen Test. vol. ii. p. 274.

ing the Gospel<sup>a</sup>. The accusation refers to some variations in the readings of particular passages: for Celsus goes on to object, that when they are pressed hard, and one reading has been confuted, they disown that, and fly to another. We cannot perceive from Origen, that Celsus specified any particular instances, and without such specification the charge is of no value. But the true conclusion to be drawn from it is, that there were in the hands of the Christians, histories, which were even then of some standing: for, various readings and corruptions do not take place in recent productions.

The former quotation, the reader will remember, proves that these books were composed by the disciples of Jesus, strictly so called; the present quotation shows, that, though objections were taken by the adversaries of the religion to the integrity of these books, none were made to their genuineness.

3. In a third passage, the Jew, whom Celsus introduces, shuts up an argument in this manner:—"these things then we have alleged to you out of *your own writings*, not needing any other weapons."<sup>b</sup> It is manifest that this boast proceeds upon the supposition that the books, over which the writer affects to triumph, possessed an authority by which Christians confessed themselves to be bound.

4. That the books to which Celsus refers were no other than our present Gospels, is made out by his allusions to various passages still found in these Gospels. Celsus takes notice of the *genealogies*, which fixes two of these Gospels; of the precepts, Resist not him that injures you, and, If a man strike thee on the one cheek, offer to him the other also<sup>c</sup>; of the woes denounced by Christ; of his predictions; of his saying, that it is impossible to serve two masters<sup>d</sup>; of the purple robe, the crown of thorns, and the reed in his hand; of the blood that flowed from the body of Jesus upon the cross<sup>e</sup>, which circumstance is recorded by John alone; and (what is *instar omnium* for the purpose for which we produce it) of the difference in the accounts given of the resurrection by the evangelists, some mentioning two angels at the sepulchre, others only one<sup>f</sup>.

It is extremely material to remark, that Celsus not only perpetually referred to the accounts of Christ contained in the four Gospels<sup>g</sup>, but that he referred to no other accounts; that

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Jewish and Heathen Test. vol. ii. p. 275.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, vol. ii. p. 276. <sup>c</sup> Ib. <sup>d</sup> Ib. p. 277. <sup>e</sup> Ib. p. 280, 281. <sup>f</sup> Ib. p. 283.

<sup>g</sup> The particulars, of which the above are only a few, are well collected by Mr. Bryant, p. 140.



he founded none of his objections to Christianity upon any thing delivered in spurious Gospels.

II. What Celsus was in the second century, Porphyry became in the third. His work, which was a large and formal treatise against the Christian religion, is not extant. We must be content therefore to gather his objections from Christian writers, who have noticed in order to answer them; and enough remains of this species of information, to prove completely, that Porphyry's animadversions were directed against the contents of our present Gospels, and of the Acts of the Apostles; Porphyry considering that to overthrow *them* was to overthrow the religion. Thus he objects to the repetition of a generation in Saint Matthew's genealogy; to Matthew's call; to the quotation of a text from Isaiah, which is found in a psalm ascribed to Asaph; to the calling of the lake of Tiberias a sea; to the expression in Saint Matthew, "the abomination of desolation;" to the variation in Matthew and Mark upon the text, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness," Matthew citing it from Isaias, Mark from the Prophets; to John's application of the term "Word;" to Christ's change of intention about going up to the feast of tabernacles (John vii. 8); to the judgement denounced by Saint Peter upon Ananias and Sapphira, which he calls an "imprecation of death."<sup>a</sup>

The instances here alleged serve, in some measure, to show the nature of Porphyry's objections, and prove that Porphyry had read the Gospels with that sort of attention which a writer would employ who regarded them as the depositaries of the religion which he attacked. Beside these specifications, there exists, in the writings of ancient Christians, general evidence that the places of Scripture upon which Porphyry had remarked were very numerous.

In some of the above-cited examples, Porphyry, speaking of Saint Matthew, calls him *your Evangelist*; he also uses the term evangelists in the plural number. What was said of Celsus, is true likewise of Porphyry, that it does not appear that he considered any history of Christ, except these, as having authority with Christians.

III. A third great writer against the Christian religion was the emperor Julian, whose work was composed about a century after that of Porphyry.

<sup>a</sup> Jewish and Heathen Test. vol. iii. p. 166, et seq.

In various long extracts, transcribed from this work by Cyril and Jerome, it appears<sup>a</sup>, that Julian noticed *by name* Matthew and Luke, in the difference between their genealogies of Christ; that he objected to Matthew's application of the prophecy, "Out of Egypt have I called my son" (ii. 15), and to that of "A virgin shall conceive" (i. 23); that he recited sayings of Christ, and various passages of his history, in the very words of the evangelists; in particular, that Jesus healed lame and blind people, and exorcised demoniacs, in the villages of Bethsaida, and Bethany; that he alleged that none of Christ's disciples ascribed to him the creation of the world, except John; that neither Paul, nor Matthew, nor Luke, nor Mark, have dared to call Jesus, God; that John wrote later than the other evangelists, and at a time when a great number of men in the cities of Greece and Italy were converted; that he alludes to the conversion of Cornelius and of Sergius Paulus, to Peter's vision, to the circular letter sent by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, which are all recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: by which quoting of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and by quoting no other, Julian shows that these were the historical books, and the only historical books, received by Christians as of authority, and as the authentic memoirs of Jesus Christ, of his apostles, and of the doctrines taught by them. But Julian's testimony does something more than represent the judgement of the Christian church in his time. It discovers also his own. He himself expressly states the early date of these records; he calls them by the names which they now bear. He all along supposes, he nowhere attempts to question, their genuineness.

The argument in favour of the books of the New Testament, drawn from the notice taken of their contents by the early writers against the religion, is very considerable. It proves that the accounts, which Christians had then, were the accounts which we have now; that our present Scriptures were theirs. It proves, moreover, that neither Celsus in the second, Porphyry in the third, nor Julian in the fourth century, suspected the authenticity of these books or ever insinuated that Christians were mistaken in the authors to whom they ascribed them. Not one of them expressed an opinion upon this subject different from what was holden by Christians. And when we consider how much it would have availed them to have cast a doubt upon this point, if they could; and how ready they showed them-

<sup>a</sup> Jewish and Heathen Test. vol. iv. p. 77, et seq.

selves to be, to take every advantage in their power; and that they were all men of learning and inquiry; their concession, or rather their suffrage, upon the subject, is extremely valuable.

In the case of Porphyry, it is made still stronger, by the consideration that he did in fact support himself by this species of objection when he saw any room for it, or when his acuteness could supply any pretence for alleging it. The prophecy of Daniel he attacked upon this very ground of spuriousness, insisting that it was written after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and maintains his charge of forgery by some far-fetched indeed, but very subtle criticisms. Concerning the writings of the New Testament, no trace of this suspicion is any where to be found in him <sup>a</sup>.

## SECTION X.

*Formal catalogues of authentic Scriptures were published, in all which our present sacred histories were included.*

THIS species of evidence comes later than the rest; as it was not natural that catalogues of any particular class of books should be put forth until Christian writings became numerous; or until some writings showed themselves, claiming titles which did not belong to them, and thereby rendering it necessary to separate books of authority from others. But, when it does appear, it is extremely satisfactory; the catalogues, though numerous, and made in countries at a wide distance from one another, differing very little, differing in nothing which is material, and all containing the four Gospels. To this last article there is no exception.

I. In the writings of Origen which remain, and in some extracts preserved by Eusebius, from works of his which are now lost, there are enumerations of the books of Scripture, in which the Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are distinctly and honourably specified, and in which no books appear beside what are now received<sup>b</sup>. The reader, by this time, will easily recollect that the date of Origen's works is A.D. 230.

II. Athanasius, about a century afterwards, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Testament in form, containing

<sup>a</sup> Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament, vol. i. p. 43. Marsh's Translation.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. iii. p. 234, et seq.; vol. viii. p. 196.



our Scriptures and no others ; of which he says, "In these alone the doctrine of Religion is taught ; let no man add to them, or take any thing from them."<sup>a</sup>

III. About twenty years after Athanasius, Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, set forth a catalogue of the books of Scripture, publicly read at that time in the church of Jerusalem, exactly the same as ours, except that the "Revelation" is omitted<sup>b</sup>.

IV. And fifteen years after Cyril, the council of Laodicea delivered an authoritative catalogue of canonical Scripture, like Cyril's, the same as ours, with the omission of the "Revelation."

V. Catalogues now became frequent. Within thirty years after the last date, that is, from the year 363 to near the conclusion of the fourth century, we have catalogues by Epiphanius<sup>c</sup>, by Gregory Nazianzen<sup>d</sup>, by Philaster, bishop of Brescia in Italy<sup>e</sup>, by Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium, all, as they are sometimes called, *clean* catalogues, (that is, they admit no books into the number beside what we now receive,) and all, for every purpose of historic evidence, the same as ours<sup>f</sup>.

VI. Within the same period Jerome, the most learned Christian writer of his age, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Testament, recognising every book now received, with the intimation of a doubt concerning the Epistle to the Hebrews alone, and taking not the least notice of any book which is not now received<sup>g</sup>.

VII. Contemporary with Jerome, who lived in Palestine, was St. Augustine, in Africa, who published likewise a catalogue, without joining to the Scriptures, as books of authority, any other ecclesiastical writing whatever, and without omitting one which we at this day acknowledge<sup>h</sup>.

VIII. And with these concurs another contemporary writer, Rufen, presbyter of Aquileia, whose catalogue, like theirs, is perfect and unmixed, and concludes with these remarkable words : "These are the volumes which the fathers have included in the canon, and out of which they would have us prove the doctrine of our faith."<sup>i</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. ii. p. 223.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. p. 270.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. p. 368.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. vol. ix. p. 132.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. p. 373.

<sup>f</sup> Epiphanius omits the Acts of the Apostles. This must have been an accidental mistake, either in him or in some copyist of his work ; for he elsewhere expressly refers to this book, and ascribes it to Luke.

<sup>g</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. x. p. 77.

<sup>h</sup> Ib. p. 213.

<sup>i</sup> Ib. p. 187.

## SECTION XI.

*These propositions cannot be predicated of any of those books which are commonly called Apocryphal Books of the New Testament.*

I do not know that the objection taken from apocryphal writings is at present much relied upon by scholars. But there are many, who, hearing that various Gospels existed in ancient times under the names of the apostles, may have taken up a notion, that the selection of our present Gospels from the rest was rather an arbitrary or accidental choice, than founded in any clear and certain cause of preference. To these it may be very useful to know the truth of the case. I observe, therefore,

I. That, beside our Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, no Christian history, claiming to be written by an apostle or apostolical man, is quoted within three hundred years after the birth of Christ, by any writer now extant or known; or, if quoted, is not quoted with marks of censure and rejection.

I have not advanced this assertion without inquiry; and I doubt not, but that the passages cited by Mr. Jones and Dr. Lardner, under the several titles which the apocryphal books bear; or a reference to the places where they are mentioned as collected in a very accurate table, published in the year 1773, by the Rev. J. Atkinson, will make out the truth of the proposition to the satisfaction of every fair and competent judgement. If there be any book which may seem to form an exception to the observation, it is a Hebrew Gospel, which was circulated under the various titles of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Nazarenes, of the Ebionites, sometimes called of the Twelve, by some ascribed to St. Matthew. This Gospel is *once*, and only *once*, cited by Clemens Alexandrinus, who lived, the reader will remember, in the latter part of the second century, and which same Clement quotes one or other of our four Gospels in almost every page of his work. It is also twice mentioned by Origen, A.D. 230; and both times with marks of diminution and discredit. And this is the ground upon which the exception stands. But what is still more material to observe is, that this Gospel, in the main, agreed with our present Gospel of Saint Matthew <sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> In applying to this Gospel, what Jerome in the latter end of the fourth century has mentioned of a Hebrew Gospel, I think it probable that we sometimes confound

Now if, with this account of the apocryphal Gospels, we compare what we have read concerning the canonical Scriptures in the preceding sections; or even recollect that general but well-founded assertion of Dr. Lardner, "That in the remaining works of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, who all lived in the first two centuries, there are more and larger quotations of the small volume of the New Testament, than of all the works of Cicero, by writers of all characters, for several ages;"<sup>a</sup> and if to this we add that, notwithstanding the loss of many works of the primitive times of Christianity, we have, within the above-mentioned period, the remains of Christian writers, who lived in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt, the part of Africa that used the Latin tongue, in Crete, Greece, Italy, and Gaul, in all which remains, references are found to our evangelists; I apprehend, that we shall perceive a clear and broad line of division, between those writings, and all others pretending to similar authority.

II. But beside certain *histories* which assumed the names of apostles, and which were forgeries properly so called, there were some other Christian writings, in the whole or in part of an historical nature, which, though not forgeries, are denominated apocryphal, as being of uncertain or of no authority.

Of this second class of writings, I have found only two which are noticed by any author of the first three centuries, without express terms of condemnation; and these are, the one, a book entitled the *Preaching of Peter*, quoted repeatedly by Clemens Alexandrinus, A.D. 196; the other, a book entitled the *Revelation of Peter*, upon which the above-mentioned Clemens Alexandrinus is said, by Eusebius, to have written notes; and which is twice cited in a work still extant, ascribed to the same author.

I conceive, therefore, that the proposition we have before advanced, even after it hath been subjected to every exception of every kind, that can be alleged, separates, by a wide interval, our historical Scriptures from all other writings which profess to give an account of the same subject.

We may be permitted however to add,

1. That there is no evidence that any spurious or apocryphal books whatever existed in the first century of the Christian æra,

it with a Hebrew copy of Saint Matthew's Gospel, whether an original or version, which was then extant.

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, *Cred.* vol. xii. p. 53.



in which century all our historical books are proved to have been extant. "There are no quotations of any such books in the apostolical fathers, by whom I mean Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, whose writings reach from about the year of our Lord 70, to the year 108 (and some of whom have quoted each and every one of our historical Scriptures): I say this," adds Dr. Lardner, "because I think it has been proved."<sup>a</sup>

2. These apocryphal writings were not read in the churches of Christians;

3. Were not admitted into their volume;

4. Do not appear in their catalogues;

5. Were not noticed by their adversaries;

6. Were not alleged by different parties, as of authority in their controversies;

7. Were not the subjects, amongst them, of commentaries, versions, collections, expositions.

Finally; beside the silence of three centuries, or evidence within that time, of their rejection, they were, with a consent nearly universal, reprobated by Christian writers of succeeding ages.

Although it be made out by these observations, that the books in question never obtained any degree of credit and notoriety which can place them in competition with our Scriptures; yet it appears, from the writings of the fourth century, that many such existed in that century, and in the century preceding it. It may be difficult at this distance of time to account for their origin. Perhaps the most probable explication is, that they were in general composed with a design of making a profit by the sale. Whatever treated of the subject would find purchasers. It was an advantage taken of the pious curiosity of unlearned Christians. With a view to the same purpose, there were many of them adapted to the particular opinions of particular sects, which would naturally promote their circulation amongst the favourers of those opinions. After all, they were probably much more obscure than we imagine. Except the Gospel according to the Hebrews, there is none of which we hear more than the Gospel of the Egyptians; yet there is good reason to believe that Clement, a presbyter of Alexandria in Egypt, A.D. 184, and a man of almost universal reading, had

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. xii. p. 153.

never seen it<sup>a</sup>. A Gospel according to Peter, was another of the most ancient books of this kind; yet Serapion, bishop of Antioch, A.D. 200, had not read it, when he heard of such a book being in the hands of the Christians of Rhossus in Cilicia; and speaks of obtaining a sight of this Gospel from some sectaries who used it<sup>b</sup>. Even of the Gospel of the Hebrews, which confessedly stands at the head of the catalogue, Jerome, at the end of the fourth century, was glad to procure a copy by the favour of the Nazarenes of Berea. Nothing of this sort ever happened, or could have happened, concerning our Gospels.

One thing is observable of all the apocryphal Christian writings, *viz.* that they proceed upon the same fundamental history of Christ and his apostles, as that which is disclosed in our Scriptures. The mission of Christ, his power of working miracles, his communication of that power to the apostles, his passion, death, and resurrection, are assumed or asserted by every one of them. The names under which some of them came forth are the names of men of eminence in our histories. What these books give, are not contradictions, but unauthorized additions. The principal facts are supposed, the principal agents the same; which shows, that these points were too much fixed to be altered or disputed.

If there be any book of this description, which appears to have imposed upon some considerable number of learned Christians, it is the Sibylline oracles; but, when we reflect upon the circumstances which facilitated that imposture, we shall cease to wonder either at the attempt or its success. It was at that time universally understood, that such a prophetic writing existed. Its contents were kept secret. This situation afforded to some one a hint, as well as an opportunity, to give out a writing under this name, favourable to the already established persuasion of Christians, and which writing, by the aid and recommendation of these circumstances, would in some degree, it is probable, be received. Of the ancient forgery we know, but little: what is now produced, could not, in my opinion, have imposed upon any one. It is nothing else than the Gospel history, woven into verse; perhaps was at first rather a fiction than a forgery; an exercise of ingenuity, more than an attempt to deceive.

<sup>a</sup> Jones, vol. i. p. 243.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. ii. p. 557.

## CHAPTER X.

## RECAPITULATION.

THE reader will now be pleased to recollect, that the two points which form the subject of our present discussion, are, first, that the Founder of Christianity, his associates, and immediate followers, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings; secondly, that they did so, in attestation of the miraculous history recorded in our Scriptures, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of that history.

The argument, by which these two propositions have been maintained by us, stands thus :

No historical fact, I apprehend, is more certain, than that the original propagators of Christianity voluntarily subjected themselves to lives of fatigue, danger, and suffering, in the prosecution of their undertaking. The nature of the undertaking; the character of the persons employed in it; the opposition of their tenets to the fixed opinions and expectations of the country in which they first advanced them; their undissembled condemnation of the religion of all other countries; their total want of power, authority, or force; render it in the highest degree probable that this must have been the case. The probability is increased, by what we know of the fate of the Founder of the institution, who was put to death for his attempt; and by what we also know of the cruel treatment of the converts to the institution, within thirty years after its commencement: both which points are attested by Heathen writers, and, being once admitted, leave it very incredible that the primitive emissaries of the religion, who exercised their ministry, first, amongst the people who had destroyed their Master, and, afterwards, amongst those who persecuted their converts, should themselves escape with impunity, or pursue their purpose in ease and safety. This probability, thus sustained by foreign testimony, is advanced, I think, to historical certainty, by the evidence of our own books; by the accounts of a writer who was the companion of the persons whose sufferings he relates; by the letters of the persons themselves; by predictions of persecutions ascribed to the founder of the religion, which predictions would not have been inserted in his history, much less have been studiously dwelt upon, if they had not accorded with the event, and which, even if falsely ascribed to him, could only have been



so ascribed, because the event suggested them; lastly, by incessant exhortations to fortitude and patience, and by an earnestness, repetition, and urgency upon the subject, which were unlikely to have appeared, if there had not been, at the time, some extraordinary call for the exercise of these virtues.

It is made out also, I think, with sufficient evidence, that both the teachers and converts of the religion, in consequence of their new profession, took up a new course of life and behaviour.

The next great question is, what they did this *FOR*. That it was *for* a miraculous story of some kind or other, is to my apprehension extremely manifest; because, as to the fundamental article, the designation of the person, *viz.* that this particular person, Jesus of Nazareth, ought to be received as the Messiah, or as a messenger from God, they neither had, nor could have, any thing but miracles to stand upon. That the exertions and sufferings of the apostles were *for* the story which we have now, is proved by the consideration that this story is transmitted to us by two of their own number, and by two others personally connected with them; that the particularity of the narrative proves, that the writers claimed to possess circumstantial information, that from their situation they had full opportunity of acquiring such information, that they certainly, at least, knew what their colleagues, their companions, their masters, taught; that each of these books contains enough to prove the truth of the religion; that, if any one of them therefore be genuine, it is sufficient; that the genuineness, however, of all of them is made out, as well by the general arguments which evince the genuineness of the most undisputed remains of antiquity, as also by peculiar and specific proofs, *viz.* by citations from them in writings belonging to a period immediately contiguous to that in which they were published; by the distinguished regard paid by early Christians to the authority of these books; (which regard was manifested by their collecting of them into a volume, appropriating to that volume titles of peculiar respect, translating them into various languages, digesting them into harmonies, writing commentaries upon them, and, still more conspicuously, by the reading of them, in their public assemblies in all parts of the world;) by an universal agreement with respect to *these* books, whilst doubts were entertained concerning some others; by contending sects appealing to them; by the early adversaries of the religion not disputing their genuineness,

but, on the contrary, treating them as the depositaries of the history upon which the religion was founded; by many formal catalogues of these, as of certain and authoritative writings, published in different and distant parts of the Christian world; lastly, by the absence or defect of the above-cited topics of evidence, when applied to any other histories of the same subject.

These are strong arguments to prove, that the books actually proceeded from the authors whose names they bear (and have always borne, for there is not a particle of evidence to show that they ever went under any other); but the strict genuineness of the books is perhaps more than is necessary to the support of our proposition. For even supposing that, by reason of the silence of antiquity, or the loss of records, we knew not who were the writers of the four Gospels, yet the fact, that they were received as authentic accounts of the transaction upon which the religion rested, and were received as such by Christians, at or near the age of the apostles, by those whom the apostles had taught, and by societies which the apostles had founded; this fact, I say, connected with the consideration, that they are corroborative of each other's testimony, and that they are further corroborated by another contemporary history, taking up the story where they had left it, and, in a narrative built upon that story, accounting for the rise and production of changes in the world, the effects of which subsist at this day; connected moreover, with the confirmation which they receive, from letters written by the apostles themselves, which both assume the same general story, and, as often as occasions lead them to do so, allude to particular parts of it; and connected also with the reflection, that if the apostles delivered any different story, it is lost; (the present and no other being referred to by a series of Christian writers, down from their age to our own; being likewise recognised in a variety of institutions, which prevailed early and universally, amongst the disciples of the religion;) and that so great a change as the oblivion of one story and the substitution of another, under such circumstances, could not have taken place: this evidence would be deemed, I apprehend, sufficient to prove concerning these books, that, whoever were the authors of them, they exhibit the story which the apostles told, and for which, consequently, they acted, and they suffered.

If it be so, the religion must be true. These men could not be deceivers. By only not bearing testimony, they might have

avoided all these sufferings, and have lived quietly. Would men in such circumstances pretend to have seen what they never saw ; assert facts which they had no knowledge of ; go about lying to teach virtue ; and, though not only convinced of Christ's being an impostor, but having seen the success of his imposture in his crucifixion, yet persist in carrying it on ; and so persist, as to bring upon themselves, for nothing, and with a full knowledge of the consequence, enmity and hatred, danger and death ?

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## OF THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

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### PROPOSITION II.

#### CHAPTER I.

Our first proposition was, *That there is satisfactory evidence that many, pretending to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undertaken and undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts ; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

Our second proposition, and which now remains to be treated of, is, *That there is NOT satisfactory evidence, that persons pretending to be original witnesses of any other similar miracles, have acted in the same manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts.*

I ENTER upon this part of my argument, by declaring how far my belief in miraculous accounts goes. If the reformers in the time of Wickliffe, or of Luther ; or those of England, in the time of Henry the Eighth, or of Queen Mary ; or the founders of our religious sects since, such as were Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Wesley in our times ; had undergone the life of toil and exertion, of danger and sufferings, which we know that many of them did undergo, *for* a miraculous story ; that is to say, if they had founded their public ministry upon the allegation of miracles wrought within their own knowledge, and upon narratives



which could not be resolved into delusion or mistake ; and if it had appeared, that their conduct really had its origin in these accounts, I should have believed them. Or, to borrow an instance which will be familiar to every one of my readers, if the late Mr. Howard had undertaken his labours and journeys in attestation, and in consequence of a clear and sensible miracle, I should have believed him also. Or to represent the same thing under a third supposition ; if Socrates had professed to perform public miracles at Athens ; if the friends of Socrates, Phædo, Cebes, Crito, and Simmias, together with Plato, and many of his followers, relying upon the attestations which these miracles afforded to his pretensions, had, at the hazard of their lives, and the certain expense of their ease and tranquillity, gone about Greece, after his death, to publish and propagate his doctrines : and if these things had come to our knowledge, in the same way as that in which the life of Socrates is now transmitted to us, through the hands of his companions and disciples, that is, by writings received without doubt as theirs, from the age in which they were published to the present, I should have believed this likewise. And my belief would, in each case, be much strengthened, if the subject of the mission were of importance to the conduct and happiness of human life ; if it testified any thing which it behoved mankind to know from such authority ; if the nature of what it delivered, required the sort of proof which it alleged ; if the occasion was adequate to the interposition, the end worthy of the means. In the last case, my faith would be much confirmed, if the effects of the transaction *remained* ; more especially, if a change had been wrought, at the time, in the opinion and conduct of such numbers, as to lay the foundation of an institution, and of a system of doctrines, which had since overspread the greatest part of the civilised world. I should have believed, I say, the testimony, in these cases ; yet none of them do more than come up to the apostolic history.

If any one choose to call assent to its evidence credulity, it is at least incumbent upon him to produce examples in which the same evidence hath turned out to be fallacious. And this contains the precise question which we are now to agitate.

In stating the comparison between our evidence, and what our adversaries may bring into competition with ours, we will divide the distinctions which we wish to propose into two kinds,—those which relate to the proof, and those which relate

to the miracles. Under the former head we may lay out of the case,

I. Such accounts of supernatural events as are found only in histories by some ages posterior to the transaction, and of which it is evident that the historian could know little more than his reader. Ours is contemporary history. This difference alone removes out of our way the miraculous history of Pythagoras, who lived five hundred years before the Christian æra, written by Porphyry and Jamblicus, who lived three hundred years after that æra; the prodigies of Livy's history; the fables of the heroic ages; the whole of the Greek and Roman, as well as of the Gothic mythology; a great part of the legendary history of Popish saints, the very best attested of which is extracted from the certificates that are exhibited during the process of their canonization, a ceremony which seldom takes place till a century after their deaths. It applies also with considerable force to the miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus, which are contained in a solitary history of his life, published by Philostratus, above a hundred years after his death; and in which, whether Philostratus had any prior account to guide him, depends upon his single unsupported assertion. Also to some of the miracles of the third century, especially to one extraordinary instance, the account of Gregory, bishop of Neocesarea, called Thaumaturgus, delivered in the writings of Gregory of Nyssen, who lived one hundred and thirty years after the subject of his panegyric.

The value of this circumstance is shown to have been accurately exemplified in the history of Ignatius Loyola, founder of the order of Jesuits<sup>a</sup>. His life, written by a companion of his, and by one of the order, was published about fifteen years after his death. In which life, the author, so far from ascribing any miracles to Ignatius, industriously states the reasons why he was not invested with any such power. The life was republished fifteen years afterwards, with the addition of many circumstances, which were the fruit, the author says, of further inquiry, and of diligent examination; but still with a total silence about miracles. When Ignatius had been dead nearly sixty years, the Jesuits, conceiving a wish to have the founder of their order placed in the Roman calendar, began, as it should seem, for the first time, to attribute to him a catalogue of miracles, which could not then be distinctly disproved; and which

<sup>a</sup> Douglas's Criterion of Miracles, p. 74.

there was, in those who governed the church, a strong disposition to admit upon the slenderest proofs.

II. We may lay out of the case, accounts published in one country, of what passed in a distant country, without any proof that such accounts were known or received at home. In the case of Christianity, Judea, which was the scene of the transaction, was the centre of the mission. The story was published in the place in which it was acted. The church of Christ was first planted at Jerusalem itself. With that church, others corresponded. From thence the primitive teachers of the institution went forth; thither they assembled. The church of Jerusalem, and the several churches of Judea, subsisted from the beginning, and for many ages<sup>a</sup>; received also the same books and the same accounts, as other churches did.

This distinction disposes, amongst others, of the above-mentioned miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus, most of which are related to have been performed in India; no evidence remaining that either the miracles ascribed to him, or the history of those miracles, were ever heard of in India. Those of Francis Xavier, the Indian missionary, with many others of the Romish breviary, are liable to the same objection, *viz.* that the accounts of them were published at a vast distance from the supposed scene of the wonders<sup>b</sup>.

III. We lay out of the case *transient* rumours. Upon the first publication of an extraordinary account, or even of an article of ordinary intelligence, no one who is not personally acquainted with the transaction can know whether it be true or false, because any man may publish any story. It is in the future confirmation, or contradiction, of the account; in its permanency, or its disappearance; its dying away into silence, or its increasing in notoriety; its being followed up by subsequent accounts, and being repeated in different and independent accounts; that solid truth is distinguished from fugitive lies. This distinction is altogether on the side of Christianity. The story did not drop. On the contrary, it was succeeded by a train of action and events dependent upon it. The accounts, which we have in our hands, were composed after the first reports must have subsided. They were followed by a train of writings upon the subject. The historical testimonies of the transaction were

<sup>a</sup> The succession of many eminent bishops of Jerusalem in the first three centuries is distinctly preserved; as Alexander, A.D. 212, who succeeded Narcissus, then 116 years old.

<sup>b</sup> Douglas's Crit. p. 84.



many and various, and connected with letters, discourses, controversies, apologies, successively produced by the same transaction.

IV. We may lay out of the case what I call *naked* history. It has been said, that if the prodigies of the Jewish history had been found only in fragments of Manetho, or Berosus, we should have paid no regard to them: and I am willing to admit this. If we knew nothing of the fact, but from the fragment; if we possessed no proof that these accounts had been credited and acted upon, from times, probably, as ancient as the accounts themselves; if we had no visible effects connected with the history, no subsequent or collateral testimony to confirm it; under these circumstances, I think that it would be undeserving of credit. But this certainly is not our case. In appreciating the evidence of Christianity, the books are to be combined with the institution; with the prevalency of the religion at this day; with the time and place of its origin, which are acknowledged points; with the circumstances of its rise and progress, as collected from external history; with the fact of our present books being received by the votaries of the institution from the beginning; with that of other books coming after these, filled with accounts of effects and consequences resulting from the transaction, or referring to the transaction, or built upon it; lastly, with the consideration of the number and variety of the books themselves, the different writers from which they proceed, the different views with which they were written, so disagreeing as to repel the suspicion of confederacy, so agreeing as to show that they were founded in a common original, *i. e.* in a story substantially the same. Whether this proof be satisfactory or not, it is properly a cumulation of evidence, by no means a naked or solitary record.

V. A mark of historical truth, although only a certain way, and to a certain degree, is *particularity*, in names, dates, places, circumstances, and in the order of events preceding or following the transaction: of which kind, for instance, is the particularity in the description of St. Paul's voyage and shipwreck, in the 27th chapter of the Acts, which no man, I think, can read without being convinced that the writer was there; and also in the account of the cure and examination of the blind man, in the ninth chapter of Saint John's Gospel, which bears every mark of personal knowledge on the part of the historian<sup>a</sup>. I do not

<sup>a</sup> Both these chapters ought to be read for the sake of this very observation.

deny that fiction has often the particularity of truth ; but then it is of studied and elaborate fiction, or of a formal attempt to deceive, that we observe this. Since, however, experience proves that particularity is not confined to truth, I have stated that it is a proof of truth only to a certain extent, *i. e.* it reduces the question to this, whether we can depend or not upon the *probity* of the relater? which is a considerable advance in our present argument ; for an express attempt to deceive, in which case alone particularity can appear without truth, is charged upon the evangelists by few. If the historian acknowledge himself to have received his intelligence from others, the particularity of the narrative shows, *prima facie*, the accuracy of his enquiries, and the fulness of his information. This remark belongs to Saint Luke's history. Of the particularity which we allege, many examples may be found in all the Gospels. And it is very difficult to conceive, that such numerous particularities, as are almost every where to be met with in the Scriptures, should be raised out of nothing, or be spun out of the imagination without any fact to go upon<sup>a</sup>.

It is to be remarked, however, that this particularity is only to be looked for in direct history. It is not natural in references or allusions, which yet, in other respects, often afford, as far as they go, the most unsuspecting evidence.

VI. We lay out of the case such stories of supernatural events as require, on the part of the hearer, nothing more than an *otiose* assent ; stories upon which nothing depends, in which no interest is involved, nothing is to be done or changed in consequence of believing them. Such stories are credited, if the careless assent that is given to them deserve that name, more by the indolence of the hearer, than by his judgment : or, though not much credited, are passed from one to another without inquiry or resistance. To this case, and to this case alone, belongs what is called the love of the marvellous. I have never known it carry men further. Men do not suffer persecution

<sup>a</sup> "There is always some truth where there are considerable particularities related ; and they always seem to bear some proportion to one another. Thus there is a great want of the particulars of time, place, and persons, in Manetho's account of the Egyptian Dynasties, Etesias's of the Assyrian Kings, and those which the technical chronologers have given of the ancient kingdoms of Greece ; and, agreeably thereto, the accounts have much fiction and falsehood, with some truth ; whereas Thucydides's History of the Peloponnesian War, and Caesar's of the War in Gaul, in both which the particulars of time, place, and persons, are mentioned, are universally esteemed true to a great degree of exactness." Hartley, vol. ii. p. 109.

from the love of the marvellous. Of the indifferent nature we are speaking of, are most vulgar errors and popular superstition : most, for instance, of the current reports of apparitions. Nothing depends upon their being true or false. But not, surely, of this kind were the alleged miracles of Christ and his apostles. They decided, if true, the most important question upon which the human mind can fix its anxiety. They claimed to regulate the opinions of mankind, upon subjects in which they are not only deeply concerned, but usually refractory and obstinate. Men could not be utterly careless in such a case as this. If a Jew took up the story, he found his darling partiality to his own nation and law wounded ; if a Gentile, he found his idolatry and polytheism reprobated and condemned. Whoever entertained the account, whether Jew or Gentile, could not avoid the following reflection :—" If these things be true, I must give up the opinions and principles in which I have been brought up, the religion in which my fathers lived and died." It is not conceivable that a man should do this upon any idle report or frivolous account, or, indeed, without being fully satisfied and convinced of the truth and credibility of the narrative to which he trusted. But it did not stop at opinions. They who believed Christianity, acted upon it. Many made it the express business of their lives to publish the intelligence. It was required of those who admitted that intelligence to change forthwith their conduct and their principles, to take up a different course of life, to part with their habits and gratifications, and begin a new set of rules, and system of behaviour. The apostles, at least, were interested not to sacrifice their ease, their fortunes, and their lives for an idle tale ; multitudes beside them were induced, by the same tale, to encounter opposition, danger, and sufferings.

If it be said, that the mere promise of a future state would do all this ; I answer, that the mere promise of a future state, without any evidence to give credit or assurance to it, would do nothing. A few wandering fishermen talking of a resurrection of the dead, could produce no effect. If it be further said, that men easily believe what they anxiously desire ; I again answer that, in my opinion, the very contrary of this is nearer to the truth. Anxiety of desire, earnestness of expectation, the vastness of an event, rather causes men to disbelieve, to doubt, to dread a fallacy, to distrust, and to examine. When our Lord's



resurrection was first reported to the apostles, they did not believe, we are told, for joy. This was natural, and is agreeable to experience.

VII. We have laid out of the case those accounts which require no more than a simple assent ; and we now also lay out of the case those which come merely *in affirmance* of opinions already formed. This last circumstance is of the utmost importance to notice well. It has long been observed, that Popish miracles happen in Popish countries ; that they make no converts ; which proves that stories are accepted, when they fall in with principles already fixed, with the public sentiments, or with the sentiments of a party already engaged on the side the miracle supports, which would not be attempted to be produced in the face of enemies, in opposition to reigning tenets or favourite prejudices, or when, if they be believed, the belief must draw men away from their preconceived and habitual opinions, from their modes of life and rules of action. In the former case, men may not only receive a miraculous account, but may both act and suffer on the side, and in the cause, which the miracle supports, yet not act or suffer for the miracle, but in pursuance of a prior persuasion. The miracle, like any other argument which only confirms what was before believed, is admitted with little examination. In the moral, as in the natural world, it is *change* which requires a cause. Men are easily fortified in their old opinions, driven from them with great difficulty. Now how does this apply to the Christian history ? The miracles, there recorded, were wrought in the midst of enemies, under a government, a priesthood, and a magistracy, decidedly and vehemently adverse to them, and to the pretensions which they supported. They were Protestant miracles in a Popish country ; they were Popish miracles in the midst of Protestants. They produced a change ; they established a society upon the spot, adhering to the belief of them ; they made converts ; and those who were converted gave up to the testimony their most fixed opinions and most favourite prejudices. They who acted and suffered in the cause, acted and suffered *for* the miracles : for there was no anterior persuasion to induce them, no prior reverence, prejudice, or partiality to take hold of. Jesus had not one follower when he set up his claim. His miracles gave birth to his sect. No part of this description belongs to the ordinary evidence of Heathen or Popish miracles. Even most of the miracles alleged to have been performed by Christians, in the

second and third century of its æra, want this confirmation. It constitutes indeed a line of partition between the *origin* and the *progress* of Christianity. Frauds and fallacies might mix themselves with the progress, which could not possibly take place in the commencement of the religion; at least, according to any laws of human conduct that we are acquainted with. What should suggest to the first propagators of Christianity, especially to fishermen, tax-gatherers, and husbandmen, such a thought as that of changing the religion of the world; what could bear them through the difficulties in which the attempt engaged them; what could procure any degree of success to the attempt? are questions which apply, with great force, to the setting out of the institution, with less, to every future stage of it.

To hear some men talk, one would suppose the setting up a religion by miracles to be a thing of every day's experience: whereas the whole current of history is against it. Hath any founder of a new sect amongst Christians pretended to miraculous powers, and succeeded by his pretensions? "Were these powers claimed or exercised by the founders of the sects of the Waldenses and Albigenses? Did Wickliffe in England pretend to it? Did Huss or Jerome in Bohemia? Did Luther in Germany, Zuinglius in Switzerland, Calvin in France, or any of the reformers advance this plea?"<sup>a</sup> The French prophets, in the beginning of the present century<sup>b</sup>, ventured to allege miraculous evidence, and immediately ruined their cause by their temerity. "Concerning the religion of ancient Rome, of Turkey, of Siam, of China, a single miracle cannot be named, that was ever offered as a test of any of those religions *before* their establishment."<sup>c</sup>

We may add to what has been observed of the distinction which we are considering, that, where miracles are alleged merely in affirmance of a prior opinion, they who believe the doctrine may sometimes propagate a belief of the miracles which they do not themselves entertain. This is the case of what are called *pious* frauds; but it is a case, I apprehend, which takes place solely in support of a persuasion already established. At least it does not hold of the apostolical history. If the apostles did not believe the miracles, they did not believe the religion; and, without this belief, where was the *piety*, what place was there for anything which could bear the name or colour of piety, in publishing and attesting miracles in its

<sup>a</sup> Campbell on Miracles, p. 120, ed. 1766.

<sup>b</sup> The eighteenth.

<sup>c</sup> Adams on Mir. p. 75.

behalf? If it be said that many promote the belief of revelation, and of any accounts which favour that belief, because they think them, whether well or ill founded, of public and political utility ; I answer, that if a character exist, which can with less justice than another be ascribed to the founders of the Christian religion, it is that of politicians, or of men capable of entertaining political views. The truth is, that there is no assignable character which will account for the conduct of the apostles, supposing their story to be false. If bad men, what could have induced them to take such pains to promote virtue? If good men, they would not have gone about the country with a string of lies in their mouths.

IN APPRECIATING the credit of any miraculous story, these are distinctions which relate to the evidence. There are other distinctions, of great moment in the question, which relate to the miracles themselves. Of which latter kind the following ought carefully to be retained.

I. It is not necessary to admit as a miracle, what can be resolved into a *false perception*. Of this nature was the demon of Socrates ; the visions of Saint Anthony, and of many others ; the vision which Lord Herbert of Cherbury describes himself to have seen ; Colonel Gardiner's vision, as related in his life, written by Dr. Doddridge. All these may be accounted for by a momentary insanity ; for the characteristic symptom of human madness is the rising up in the mind of images not distinguishable by the patient from impressions upon the senses<sup>a</sup>. The cases, however, in which the possibility of this delusion exists, are divided from the cases in which it does not exist, by many, and those not obscure marks. They are, for the most part, cases of visions or voices. The object is hardly ever touched. The vision submits not to be handled. One sense does not confirm another. They are likewise almost always cases of a *solitary* witness. It is in the highest degree improbable, and I know not, indeed, whether it hath ever been the fact, that the same derangement of the mental organs should seize different persons at the same time ; a derangement, I mean, so much the same, as to represent to their imagination the same objects. Lastly, these are always cases of *momentary* miracles ; by which term I mean to denote miracles, of which the whole existence is of short duration, in contradistinction to miracles which are attended with permanent effects. The appearance of a spectre,

<sup>a</sup> Batty on Lunacy.



the hearing of a supernatural sound, is a momentary miracle. The sensible proof is gone, when the apparition or sound is over. But if a person born blind be restored to sight, a notorious cripple to the use of his limbs, or a dead man to life, here is a permanent effect produced by supernatural means. The change indeed was instantaneous, but the proof continues. The subject of the miracle remains. The man cured or restored is there : his former condition was known, and his present condition may be examined. This can by no possibility be resolved into false perception : and of this kind are by far the greater part of the miracles recorded in the New Testament. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, he did not merely move, and speak, and die again ; or come out of the grave, and vanish away. He returned to his home and family, and there continued ; for we find him some time afterwards in the same town, sitting at table with Jesus and his sisters ; visited by great multitudes of the Jews as a subject of curiosity ; giving by his presence so much uneasiness to the Jewish rulers as to beget in them a design of destroying him <sup>a</sup>. No delusion can account for this. The French prophets in England, some time since, gave out that one of their teachers would come to life again ; but their enthusiasm never made them believe that they actually saw him alive. The blind man, whose restoration to sight at Jerusalem is recorded in the ninth chapter of Saint John's Gospel, did not quit the place or conceal himself from inquiry. On the contrary, he was forthcoming, to answer the call, to satisfy the scrutiny, and to sustain the browbeating of Christ's angry and powerful enemies. When the cripple at the gate of the temple was suddenly cured by Peter <sup>b</sup>, he did not immediately relapse into his former lameness, or disappear out of the city ; but boldly and honestly produced himself along with the apostles, when they were brought the next day before the Jewish council <sup>c</sup>. Here, though the miracle was sudden, the proof was permanent. The lameness had been notorious, the cure continued. This, therefore, could not be the effect of any momentary delirium, either in the subject or in the witnesses of the transaction. It is the same with the greatest number of the Scripture miracles. There are other cases of a *mixed* nature, in which, although the principal miracle be momentary, some circumstance combined with it is permanent. Of this kind is the history of Saint Paul's conversion <sup>d</sup>. The sudden light and sound, the vi-

<sup>a</sup> John xii. 1, 2, 9, 10.<sup>b</sup> Acts iii. 2.<sup>c</sup> Acts iv. 14.<sup>d</sup> Ib. ix.

sion and the voice, upon the road to Damascus, were momentary : but Paul's blindness for three days in consequence of what had happened ; the communication made to Ananias in another place, and by a vision independent of the former ; Ananias finding out Paul in consequence of intelligence so received, and finding him in the condition described, and Paul's recovery of his sight upon Ananias laying his hands upon him : are circumstances, which take the transaction, and the principal miracle as included in it, entirely out of the case of momentary miracles, or of such as may be accounted for by false perceptions. Exactly the same thing may be observed of Peter's vision preparatory to the call of Cornelius, and of its connexion with what was imparted in a distant place to Cornelius himself, and with the message despatched by Cornelius to Peter. The vision might be a dream ; the message could not. Either communication, taken separately, might be a delusion ; the concurrence of the two was impossible to happen without a supernatural cause.

Beside the risk of delusion which attaches upon momentary miracles, there is also much more room for *imposture*. The account cannot be examined at the moment : and, when that is also a moment of hurry and confusion, it may not be difficult for men of influence to gain credit to any story which they may wish to have believed. This is precisely the case of one of the best attested of the miracles of Old Rome, the appearance of Castor and Pollux in the battle fought by Posthumius with the Latins at the lake Regillus. There is no doubt but that Posthumius, after the battle, spread the report of such an appearance. No person could deny it, whilst it was said to last. No person, perhaps, had any inclination to dispute it afterwards ; or, if they had, could say with positiveness, what was or what was not seen, by some or other of the army, in the dismay and amidst the tumult of a battle.

In assigning false perceptions as the origin to which some miraculous accounts may be referred, I have not mentioned claims to inspiration, illuminations, secret notices or directions, internal sensations, or consciousnesses of being acted upon by spiritual influences, good or bad ; because these, appealing to no external proof, however convincing they may be to the persons themselves, form no part of what can be accounted miraculous evidence. Their own credibility stands upon their alliance with other miracles. The discussion, therefore, of all such pretensions may be omitted.

II. It is not necessary to bring into the comparison what may be called *tentative* miracles; that is, where, out of a great number of trials, some succeed; and in the accounts of which, although the narrative of the successful cases be alone preserved, and that of the unsuccessful cases sunk, yet enough is stated to show that the cases produced are only a few out of many in which the same means have been employed. This observation bears with considerable force, upon the ancient oracles and auguries, in which a single coincidence of the event with the prediction is talked of and magnified, whilst failures are forgotten, or suppressed, or accounted for. It is also applicable to the cures wrought by relics, and at the tombs of saints. The boasted efficacy of the king's touch, upon which Mr. Hume lays some stress, falls under the same description. Nothing is alleged concerning it, which is not alleged of various nostrums, namely, out of many thousands who have used them, certified proofs of a few who have recovered after them. No solution of this sort is applicable to the miracles of the Gospel. There is nothing in the narrative, which can induce, or even allow, us to believe, that Christ attempted cures in many instances, and succeeded in a few; or that he ever made the attempt in vain. He did not profess to heal every where all that were sick; on the contrary, he told the Jews, evidently meaning to represent his own case, that, "although many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land, yet unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow:" and that "many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus, the prophet, and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian."<sup>a</sup> By which examples, he gave them to understand, that it was not the nature of a Divine interposition, or necessary to its purpose, to be general; still less to answer every challenge that might be made, which would teach men to put their faith upon these experiments. Christ never pronounced the word, but the effect followed<sup>b</sup>. It was not a thousand sick that received his bene-

<sup>a</sup> Luke, iv. 25.

<sup>b</sup> One, and only one, instance may be produced in which the *disciples* of Christ do seem to have attempted a cure, and not to have been able to perform it. The story is very ingenuously related by three of the evangelists\*. The patient was afterwards healed by Christ himself; and the whole transaction seems to have

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\* Matt. xvii. 14. Mark, ix. 14. Luke, ix. 33.



diction, and a few that were benefited; a single paralytic is let down in his bed at Jesus's feet, in the midst of a surrounding multitude; Jesus bid him walk, and he did so<sup>a</sup>. A man with a withered hand is in the synagogue; Jesus bid him stretch forth his hand, in the presence of the assembly, and it was "restored whole like the other."<sup>b</sup> There was nothing tentative in these cures; nothing that can be explained by the power of accident.

We may observe also that many of the cures which Christ wrought, such as that of a person blind from his birth, also many miracles beside cures, as raising the dead, walking upon the sea, feeding a great multitude with a few loaves and fishes, are of a nature which does not in anywise admit of the supposition of a fortunate experiment.

III. We may dismiss from the question all accounts in which, allowing the phenomenon to be real, the fact to be true, it still remains *doubtful* whether a miracle were wrought. This is the case with the ancient history of what is called the thundering legion, of the extraordinary circumstances which obstructed the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem by Julian, the circling of the flames and fragrant smell at the martyrdom of Polycarp, the sudden shower that extinguished the fire into which the Scriptures were thrown in the Diocletian persecution; Constantine's dream; his inscribing in consequence of it the cross upon his standard and the shields of his soldiers; his victory and the escape of the standard-bearer; perhaps also the imagined appearance of the cross in the heavens, though this last circumstance is very deficient in historical evidence. It is also the case with the modern annual exhibition of the liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius at Naples. It is a doubt, likewise, which ought to be excluded by very special circumstances, from these narratives which relate to the supernatural cure of hypochondriacal and nervous complaints, and of all diseases which are much affected by the imagination. The miracles of the second and third century are, usually, healing the sick, and casting out evil spirits, miracles in which there is room for some error and deception. We hear nothing of causing the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the lepers to be cleansed<sup>c</sup>.

been intended, as it was well suited, to display the superiority of Christ above all who performed miracles in his name, a distinction which, during his presence in the world, it might be necessary to inculcate by some such proof as this.

<sup>a</sup> Mark, ii. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xii. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Jortin's Remarks, vol. ii. p. 51.

There are also instances in Christian writers, of reputed miracles, which were natural operations, though not known to be such at the time ; as that of articulate speech after the loss of a great part of the tongue.

IV. To the same head of objection nearly, may also be referred accounts, in which the variation of a small circumstance may have transformed some extraordinary appearance, or some critical coincidence of events, into a miracle ; stories, in a word, which may be resolved into exaggeration. The miracles of the Gospel can by no possibility be explained away in this manner. Total fiction will account for any thing ; but no stretch of exaggeration that has any parallel in other histories, no force of fancy upon real circumstances, could produce the narratives which we now have. The feeding of the five thousand with a few loaves and fishes surpasses all bounds of exaggeration. The raising of Lazarus, of the widow's son at Nain, as well as many of the cures which Christ wrought, come not within the compass of misrepresentation. I mean that it is impossible to assign any position of circumstances however peculiar, any accidental effects however extraordinary, any natural singularity, which could supply an origin or foundation to these accounts.

Having thus enumerated several exceptions, which may justly be taken to relations of miracles, it is necessary when we read the Scriptures, to bear in our minds this general remark ; that, although there be miracles recorded in the New Testament, which fall within some or other of the exceptions here assigned, yet that they are united with others, to which none of the same exceptions extend, and that their credibility stands upon this union. Thus the visions and revelations which Saint Paul asserts to have been imparted to him, may not, in their separate evidence, be distinguishable from the visions and revelations which many others have alleged. But here is the difference. Saint Paul's pretensions were attested by external miracles wrought by himself, and by miracles wrought in the cause to which these visions relate ; or, to speak more properly, the same historical authority, which informs us of one, informs us of the other. This is not ordinarily true of the visions of enthusiasts, or even of the accounts in which they are contained. Again, some of Christ's own miracles were *momentary* ; as the transfiguration, the appearance and voice from Heaven at his baptism, a voice from the clouds on one occasion afterwards (John xii. 28), and some others. It is not denied, that the distinction

which we have proposed concerning miracles of this species, applies, in diminution of the force of the evidence, as much to these instances as to others. But this is the case, not with all the miracles ascribed to Christ, nor with the greatest part, nor with many. Whatever force therefore there may be in the objection, we have numerous miracles which are free from it; and even these to which it is applicable, are little affected by it in their credit, because there are few who, admitting the rest, will reject *them*. If there be miracles of the New Testament, which come within any of the *other* heads into which we have distributed the objections, the same remark must be repeated. And this is one way, in which the unexampled number and variety of the miracles ascribed to Christ strengthens the credibility of Christianity. For it precludes any solution, or conjecture about a solution, which imagination, or even which experience, might suggest concerning some particular miracles, if considered independently of others. The miracles of Christ were of various kinds<sup>a</sup>, and performed in great varieties of situation, form, and manner; at Jerusalem, the metropolis of the Jewish nation and religion; in different parts of Judea and Galilee; in cities and villages; in synagogues, in private houses; in the street, in highways; with preparation, as in the case of Lazarus; by accident, as in the case of the widow's son of Nain; when attended by multitudes, and when alone with the patient; in the midst of his disciples, and in the presence of his enemies; with the common people around him, and before Scribes and Pharisees, and rulers of the synagogues.

I apprehend that, when we remove from the comparison the cases which are fairly disposed of by the observations that have been stated, many cases will not remain. To those which do remain, we apply this final distinction; "that there is not satisfactory evidence, that persons pretending to be original witnesses of the miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undertaken and undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and properly in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts."

<sup>a</sup> Not only healing every species of disease, but turning water into wine (John ii.); feeding multitudes with a few loaves and fishes (Matt. xiv. 15; Mark vi. 35; Luke ix. 12; John vi. 5); walking on the sea (Matt. xiv. 25); calming a storm (Matt. viii. 26; Luke viii. 24); a celestial voice at his baptism, and miraculous appearance (Matt. iii. 16; afterwards John xii. 28); his transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 1—8; Mark ix. 2; Luke ix. 28; 2 Peter i. 16, 17); raising the dead in three distinct instances (Matt. ix. 18; Mark v. 22; Luke viii. 41; Luke vii. 14; John xi.).



## CHAPTER II.

BUT they, with whom we argue, have undoubtedly a right to select their own examples. The instances with which Mr. Hume has chosen to confront the miracles of the New Testament, and which, therefore, we are entitled to regard as the strongest which the history of the world could supply to the inquiries of a very acute and learned adversary, are the three following :

I. The cure of a blind and of a lame man of Alexandria, by the emperor Vespasian, as related by Tacitus ;

II. The restoration of the limb of an attendant in a Spanish church, as told by Cardinal de Retz ; and,

III. The cures said to be performed at the tomb of the abbé Paris, in the early part of the present century.

I. The narrative of Tacitus is delivered in these terms : “ One of the common people of Alexandria, known to be diseased in his eyes, by the admonition of the god Serapis, whom that superstitious nation worship above all other gods, prostrated himself before the emperor, earnestly imploring from him a remedy for his blindness, and entreating that he would deign to anoint with his spittle his cheeks and the balls of his eyes. Another, diseased in his hand, requested, by the admonition of the same god, that he might be touched by the foot of the emperor. Vespasian at first derided and despised their application ; afterwards, when they continued to urge their petitions, he sometimes appeared to dread the imputation of vanity ; at other times, by the earnest supplication of the patients, and the persuasion of his flatterers, to be induced to hope for success. At length he commanded an inquiry to be made by the physicians, whether such a blindness and debility were vincible by human aid. The report of the physicians contained various points ; that in the one, the power of vision was not destroyed, but would return if the obstacles were removed ; that in the other, the diseased joints might be restored, if a healing power were applied ; that it was, perhaps, agreeable to the gods to do this ; that the emperor was elected by divine assistance ; lastly, that the credit of the success would be the emperor’s, the ridicule of the disappointment would fall upon the patients. Vespasian believing that every thing was in the power of his fortune, and that nothing was any longer incredible,

whilst the multitude, which stood by, eagerly expected the event, with a countenance expressive of joy, executed what he was desired to do. Immediately the hand was restored to its use, and light returned to the blind man. They who were present relate both these cures, even at this time, when there is nothing to be gained by lying.”<sup>a</sup>

Now, though Tacitus wrote this account twenty-seven years after the miracle is said to have been performed, and wrote at Rome of what passed at Alexandria, and wrote also from report: and although it does not appear that he had examined the story or that he believed it, (but rather the contrary,) yet I think his testimony sufficient to prove that such a transaction took place: by which I mean, that the two men in question did apply to Vespasian; that Vespasian did touch the diseased in the manner related; and that a cure was reported to have followed the operation. But the affair labours under a strong and just suspicion, that the whole of it was a concerted imposture brought about by collusion between the patients, the physician, and the emperor. This solution is probable, because there was every thing to suggest, and every thing to facilitate such a scheme. The miracle was calculated to confer honour upon the emperor, and upon the god Serapis. It was achieved in the midst of the emperor’s flatterers and followers; in a city, and amongst a populace, before-hand devoted to his interest, and to the worship of the god: where it would have been treason and blasphemy together to have contradicted the fame of the cure, or even to have questioned it. And what is very observable in the account is, that the report of the physicians is just such a report as would have been made of a case, in which no external marks of the disease existed, and which, consequently, was capable of being easily counterfeited; *viz.* that in the first of the patients the organs of vision were not destroyed, that the weakness of the second was in his joints. The strongest circumstance in Tacitus’s narration is, that the first patient was, “*notus tabe oculorum*,” remarked or notorious for the disease in his eyes. But this was a circumstance which might have found its way into the story in its progress from a distant country, and during an interval of thirty years; or it might be true that the malady of the eyes was notorious, yet that the nature and degree of the disease had never been ascertained; a case by no means uncom-

<sup>a</sup> Tacit. Hist. lib. iv.

mon. The emperor's reserve was easily affected; or it is possible he might not be in the secret. There does not seem to be much weight in the observation of Tacitus, that they who were present, continued even then to relate the story when there was nothing to be gained by the lie. It only proves that those who had told the story for many years persisted in it. The state of mind of the witnesses and spectators *at the time*, is the point to be attended to. Still less is there of pertinency in Mr. Hume's eulogium on the cautious and penetrating genius of the historian; for it does not appear that the historian believed it. The terms in which he speaks of Serapis, the deity to whose interposition the miracle was attributed, scarcely suffer us to suppose that Tacitus thought the miracle to be real: "by the admonition of the god Serapis, whom that superstitious nation (*dedita superstitionibus gens*) worship above all other gods." To have brought this supposed miracle within the limits of comparison with the miracles of Christ, it ought to have appeared, that a person of a low and private station, in the midst of enemies, with the whole power of the country opposing him, with every one around him prejudiced or interested against his claims and character, pretended to perform these cures, and required the spectators, upon the strength of what they saw, to give up their firmest hopes and opinions, and follow *him* through a life of trial and danger; that many were so moved, as to obey his call, at the expense both of every notion in which they had been brought up, and of their ease, safety, and reputation; and that by these beginnings, a change was produced in the world, the effects of which remain to this day: a case, both in its circumstances and consequences, very unlike any thing we find in Tacitus's relation.

II. The story taken from the Memoirs of Cardinal de Retz, which is the second example alleged by Mr. Hume, is this: "In the church of Saragossa in Spain, the canons showed me a man whose business it was to light the lamps; telling me, that he had been several years at the gate with one leg only. I saw him with two."<sup>a</sup>

It is stated by Mr. Hume, that the cardinal, who relates this story, did not believe it: and it nowhere appears that he either examined the limb, or asked the patient, or indeed any one, a single question about the matter. An artificial leg, wrought

<sup>a</sup> Liv. iv. A.D. 1654.



with art, would be sufficient, in a place where no such contrivance had ever before been heard of, to give origin and currency to the report. The ecclesiastics of the place would, it is probable, favour the story, inasmuch as it advanced the honour of their image and church. And if *they* patronized it, no other person at Saragossa, in the middle of the last century, would care to dispute it. The story likewise coincided, not less with the wishes and preconceptions of the people, than with the interests of their ecclesiastical rulers : so that there was prejudice backed by authority, and both operating upon extreme ignorance, to account for the success of the imposture. If, as I have suggested, the contrivance of an artificial limb was then new, it would not occur to the cardinal himself to suspect it ; especially under the carelessness of mind with which he heard the tale, and the little inclination he felt to scrutinize or expose its fallacy.

III. The miracles related to have been wrought at the tomb of the abbé Paris, admit in general of this solution. The patients who frequented the tomb were so affected by their devotion, their expectation, the place, the solemnity, and, above all, by the sympathy of the surrounding multitude, that many of them were thrown into violent convulsions, which convulsions, in certain instances, produced a removal of disorder, depending upon obstruction. We shall, at this day, have the less difficulty in admitting the above account, because it is the very same thing as hath lately been experienced in the operations of animal magnetism : and the report of the French physicians upon that mysterious remedy is very applicable to the present consideration, *viz.* that the pretenders to the art, by working upon the imaginations of their patients, were frequently able to produce convulsions ; that convulsions so produced are amongst the most powerful, but, at the same time, most uncertain and unmanageable applications to the human frame which can be employed.

Circumstances, which indicate this explication in the case of the Parisian miracles, are the following :

1. They were *tentative*. Out of many thousand sick, infirm, and diseased persons, who resorted to the tomb, the professed history of the miracles contains only nine cures.

2. The convulsions at the tomb are admitted.

3. The diseases were, for the most part, of that sort which depends upon inaction and obstruction, as dropsies, palsies, and some tumours.

4. The cures were gradual; some patients attending many days, some several weeks, and some several months.

5. The cures were many of them incomplete.

6. Others were temporary<sup>a</sup>.

So that all the wonder we are called upon to account for is, that, out of an almost innumerable multitude which resorted to the tomb for the cure of their complaints, and many of whom were there agitated by strong convulsions, a very small proportion experienced a beneficial change in their constitution, especially in the action of the nerves and glands.

Some of the cases alleged do not require that we should have recourse to this solution. The first case in the catalogue is scarcely distinguishable from the progress of a natural recovery. It was that of a young man, who laboured under an inflammation of one eye, and had lost the sight of the other. The inflamed eye was relieved, but the blindness of the other remained. The inflammation had before been abated by medicine; and the young man, at the time of his attendance at the tomb, was using a lotion of laudanum. And, what is a still more material part of the case, the inflammation after some interval returned. Another case was that of a young man who had lost his sight by the puncture of an awl, and the discharge of the aqueous humour through the wound. The sight, which had been gradually returning, was much improved during his visit to the tomb, that is, probably, in the same degree in which the discharged humour was replaced by fresh secretions. And it is observable, that these two are the only cases which, from their nature, should seem unlikely to be affected by convulsions.

In one material respect I allow that the Parisian miracles were different from those related by Tacitus, and from the Spanish miracle of the cardinal de Retz. They had not, like them, all the power and all the prejudice of the country on their side to begin with. They were alleged by one party against another, by the Jansenists against the Jesuits. These were of course opposed and examined by their adversaries. The consequence of which examination was, that many falsehoods were detected, that with something really extraordinary much fraud appeared to be mixed. And if some of the cases upon which designed misrepresentation could not be charged, were not at the time satisfactorily accounted for, it was because the efficacy

<sup>a</sup> The reader will find these particulars verified in the detail, by the accurate inquiries of the present bishop of Sarum, in his *Criterion of Miracles*, p. 132, et seq.

of strong spasmodic affections was not then sufficiently known. Finally, the cause of Jansenism did not rise by the miracles, but sunk, although the miracles had the anterior persuasion of all the numerous adherents of that cause to set out with.

These, let us remember, are the strongest examples, which the history of ages supplies. In none of them, was the miracle *unequivocal*; by none of them, were established prejudices and persuasions overthrown; of none of them, did the credit make its way, in opposition to authority and power; by none of them, were many induced to commit themselves, and that in contradiction to prior opinions, to a life of mortification, danger, and sufferings; none were called upon to attest them, at the expense of their fortunes and safety<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> It may be thought that the historian of the Parisian miracles, M. Montgeron, forms an exception to this last assertion. He presented his book (with a suspicion, as it should seem, of the danger of what he was doing) to the king; and was shortly afterwards committed to prison; from which he never came out. Had the miracles been unequivocal, and had M. Montgeron been originally convinced by them, I should have allowed this exception. It would have stood, I think, alone, in the argument of our adversaries. But, beside what has been observed of the dubious nature of the miracles, the account which M. Montgeron has himself left of his conversion, shows both the state of his mind, and *that his persuasion was not built upon external miracles*.—"Scarcely had he entered the church-yard, when he was struck," he tells us, "with awe and reverence, having never before heard prayers pronounced with so much ardour and transport as he observed amongst the supplicants at the tomb. Upon this, throwing himself on his knees, resting his elbows on the tomb-stone, and covering his face with his hands, he spake the following prayer. *O thou, by whose intercession so many miracles are said to be performed, if it be true that a part of thee surviveth the grave, and that thou hast influence with the Almighty, have pity on the darkness of my understanding, and through his mercy obtain the removal of it.*" Having prayed thus, "many thoughts," as he sayeth, "began to open themselves to his mind; and so profound was his attention, that he continued on his knees four hours, not in the least disturbed by the vast crowd of surrounding supplicants. During this time, all the arguments which he ever heard or read in favour of Christianity occurred to him with so much force, and seemed so strong and convincing, that he went home fully satisfied of the truth of religion in general, and of the holiness and power of that person, who," as he supposed, "had engaged the Divine Goodness to enlighten his understanding so suddenly." Douglas's Crit. of Mir. p. 214.



## PART II.

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### OF THE AUXILIARY EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### PROPHECY.

ISAIAH, lii. 13. liii. "BEHOLD, my Servant shall deal prudently ; he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee ; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men : so shall he sprinkle many nations ; the kings shall shut their mouths at him : for that which had not been told them, shall they see ; and that which they had not heard, shall they consider.—Who hath believed our report ? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground : he hath no form nor comeliness ; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief : and we hid, as it were, our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgement ; and who shall declare his generation ? for he was cut off out of the land of the living : for the transgression of my people, was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death ; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied : by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many ; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong ; because he hath poured out his soul unto death ; and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

These words are extant in a book, purporting to contain the predictions of a writer who lived seven centuries before the Christian æra.

That material part of every argument from prophecy, namely, that the words alleged were actually spoken or written before the fact to which they are applied took place, or could by any natural means be foreseen, is, in the present instance, incontestable. The record comes out of the custody of adversaries. The Jews, as an ancient father well observed, are our librarians. The passage is in their copies, as well as in ours. With many attempts to explain it away, none has ever been made by them to discredit its authenticity.

And, what adds to the force of the quotation is, that it is taken from a writing *declaredly prophetic* ; a writing, professing to describe such future transactions and changes in the world, as were connected with the fate and interests of the Jewish nation. It is not a passage in an historical or devotional composition, which, because it turns out to be applicable to some future events, or to some future situation of affairs, is presumed to have been oracular. The words of Isaiah were delivered by him in a prophetic character, with the solemnity belonging to that character : and what he so delivered, was all along understood by the Jewish reader to refer to something that was to take place after the time of the author. The public sentiments of the Jews concerning the design of Isaiah's writings are set forth in the book of Ecclesiasticus<sup>a</sup> : “ He saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass at the last, and he comforted them that mourned in Sion. He showed what should come to pass for ever, and secret things or ever they came.”

It is also an advantage which this prophecy possesses, that it

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xlviii. ver. 24.

is intermixed with no other subject. It is entire, separate, and uninterruptedly directed to one scene of things.

The *application* of the prophecy to the evangelic history is plain and appropriate. Here is no double sense; no figurative language, but what is sufficiently intelligible to every reader of every country. The obscurities (by which I mean the expressions that require a knowledge of local diction, and of local allusion) are few, and not of great importance. Nor have I found that varieties of reading, or a different construing of the original, produce any material alteration in the sense of the prophecy. Compare the common translation with that of Bishop Lowth, and the difference is not considerable. So far as they do differ, Bishop Lowth's corrections, which are the faithful result of an accurate examination, bring the description nearer to the New Testament history than it was before. In the fourth verse of the fifty-third chapter, what our Bible renders "stricken," he translates "judicially stricken:" and in the eighth verse, the clause "he was taken from prison and from judgement," the bishop gives "by an oppressive judgement he was taken off." The next words to these, "who shall declare his generation?" are much cleared up in their meaning, by the bishop's version; "his manner of life who would declare?" *i. e.* who would stand forth in his defence? The former part of the ninth verse, "and he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," which inverts the circumstances of Christ's passion, the bishop brings out in an order perfectly agreeable to the event; "and his grave was appointed with the wicked, but with the rich man was his tomb." The words in the eleventh verse, "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many," are, in the bishop's version, "by the *knowledge of him* shall my righteous servant justify many."

It is natural to inquire what turn the Jews themselves give to this prophecy<sup>a</sup>. There is good proof that the ancient Rabbins explained it of their expected Messiah<sup>b</sup>: but their modern expositors concur, I think, in representing it as a description of the calamitous state, and intended restoration of the Jewish people, who are here, as they say, exhibited under the character of a single person. I have not discovered that their exposition

<sup>a</sup> "Vaticinium hoc Esaiæ est carnificina Rabbiorum, de quo aliqui Judæi mihi confessi sunt, Rabbinos suos ex prophetis scripturis facile se extricare potuisse, modò Esaias tacuisset." Hulse, Theol. Jud. p. 318, quoted by Poole, in loc.

<sup>b</sup> Hulse, Theol. Jud. p. 430.



rests upon any critical arguments, or upon these in any other than in a very minute degree. The clause in the ninth verse, which we render "for the transgression of my people was he stricken," and in the margin, "was the stroke upon him," the Jews read "for the transgression of my people was the stroke upon *them*." And what they allege in support of the alteration amounts only to this, that the Hebrew pronoun is capable of a plural as well as of a singular signification; that is to say, is capable of their construction as well as ours<sup>a</sup>. And this is all the variation contended for; the rest of the prophecy they read as we do. The probability, therefore, of their exposition, is a subject of which we are as capable of judging as themselves. This judgement is open indeed to the good sense of every attentive reader. The application which the Jews contend for, appears to me to labour under insuperable difficulties; in particular, it may be demanded of them to explain, in *whose* name or person, if the Jewish people be the sufferer, does the prophet speak, when he says, "He hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows, yet *we* did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; but he was wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities, the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him, and

<sup>a</sup> Bishop Lowth adopts in this place the reading of the Seventy, which gives smitten *to death*, "for the transgression of my people was he smitten to death." The addition of the words "to death," makes an end of the Jewish interpretation of the clause. And the authority upon which this reading (though not given by the present Hebrew text) is adopted, Dr. Kennicot has set forth by an argument not only so cogent, but so clear and popular, that I beg leave to transcribe the substance of it into this note:—"Origen, after having quoted at large this prophecy concerning the Messiah, tells us, that, having once made use of this passage, in a dispute against some that were accounted wise amongst the Jews, one of them replied that the words did not mean one man, but one people, the Jews, who were smitten of God, and dispersed among the Gentiles for their conversion; that he then urged many parts of this prophecy to show the absurdity of this interpretation, and that he seemed to press them the hardest by this sentence,—'for the transgression of my people was he smitten to death.' Now as Origen, the author of the Hexapla, must have understood Hebrew, we cannot suppose that he would have urged this last text as so decisive, if the Greek version had not agreed here with the Hebrew text; nor that these wise Jews would have been at all distressed by this quotation, unless the Hebrew text had read agreeably to the words 'to death,' on which the argument principally depended; for, by quoting it immediately, they would have triumphed over him, and reprobated his Greek version. This, whenever they could do it, was their constant practice in their disputes with the Christians. Origen himself, who laboriously compared the Hebrew text with the Septuagint, has recorded the necessity of arguing with the Jews, from such passages only, as were in the Septuagint agreeable to the Hebrew. Wherefore, as Origen had carefully compared the Greek version of the Septuagint with the Hebrew text; and as he puzzled and confounded the learned Jews, by urging upon them, the reading 'to death' in this place; it seems almost impossible not to conclude, both from Origen's argument, and the silence of his Jewish adversaries, that the Hebrew text at that time actually had the word agreeably to the version of the seventy." Lowth's Isaiah, p. 242.

with his stripes *we* are healed.” Again, the description in the seventh verse, “he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth ; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth,” quadrates with no part of the Jewish history with which we are acquainted. The mention of the “grave” and the “tomb,” in the ninth verse, is not very applicable to the fortunes of a nation ; and still less so is the conclusion of the prophecy in the twelfth verse, which expressly represents the sufferings as *voluntary*, and the sufferer as interceding for the offenders ; “because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

There are other prophecies of the Old Testament, interpreted by Christians to relate to the Gospel history, which are deserving both of great regard, and of a very attentive consideration : but I content myself with stating the above, as well because I think it the clearest and the strongest of all, as because most of the rest, in order that their value might be represented with any tolerable degree of fidelity, require a discussion unsuitable to the limits and nature of this work. The reader will find them disposed in order, and distinctly explained, in Bishop Chandler’s treatise on the subject ; and he will bear in mind, what has been often, and, I think, truly, urged by the advocates of Christianity, that there is no other eminent person, to the history of whose life so many circumstances can be made to apply. They who object that much has been done by the power of chance, the ingenuity of accommodation, and the industry of research, ought to try whether the same, or any thing like it, could be done, if Mahomet, or any other person, were proposed as the subject of Jewish prophecy.

II. A second head of argument from prophecy is founded upon our Lord’s predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, recorded by three out of the four evangelists.

Luke, xxi. 5—25. “And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be ? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass ? And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived ; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am

Christ; and the time draweth near; go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by-and-by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines and pestilences; and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before, what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days: for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

In terms nearly similar, this discourse is related in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the thirteenth of Mark. The prospect of the same evils, drew from our Saviour, on another occasion, the following affecting expressions of concern, which are preserved by Saint Luke (xix. 41—44.): "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not



leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation.”—These passages are direct and explicit predictions. References to the same event, some plain, some parabolical, or otherwise figurative, are found in divers other discourses of our Lord <sup>a</sup>.

The general agreement of the description with the event, viz. with the ruin of the Jewish nation, and the capture of Jerusalem under Vespasian, thirty-six years after Christ's death, is most evident; and the accordancy in various articles of detail and circumstances has been shown by many learned writers. It is also an advantage to the inquiry, and to the argument built upon it, that we have received a copious account of the transaction from Josephus, a Jewish and contemporary historian. This part of the case is perfectly free from doubt. The only question which, in my opinion, can be raised upon the subject, is, whether the prophecy was really delivered *before* the event; I shall apply, therefore, my observations to this point solely.

1. The judgement of antiquity, though varying in the precise year of the publication of the three Gospels, *concurs* in assigning them a date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem <sup>b</sup>.

2. This judgement is confirmed by a strong probability arising from the course of human life. The destruction of Jerusalem took place in the seventieth year after the birth of Christ. The three evangelists, one of whom was his immediate companion, and the other two associated with his companions, were, it is probable, not much younger than he was. They must, consequently, have been far advanced in life when Jerusalem was taken; and no reason has been given why they should defer writing their histories so long.

3. <sup>c</sup> If the evangelists, at the time of writing the Gospels, had known of the destruction of Jerusalem, by which catastrophe the prophecies were plainly fulfilled, it is most probable, that, in recording the predictions, they would have dropped some word or other about the completion; in like manner as Luke, after relating the denunciation of a dearth by Agabus, adds, “which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar;” <sup>d</sup> whereas the prophecies are given distinctly in one chapter of each of the first three Gospels, and referred to in several different pas-

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxi. 33—46. xxii. 1—7. Mark xii. 1—12. Luke xiii. 1—9. xx. 9—20. xxi. 5—13.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, vol. xiii.

<sup>c</sup> Le Clerc. Diss. III. de Quat. Evang. num. vii. p. 541.

<sup>d</sup> Acts, xi. 28.

sages of each, and, in none of all these places, does there appear the smallest intimation that the things spoken of had come to pass. I do admit, that it would have been the part of an impostor, who wished his readers to believe that this book was written before the event, when in truth it was written after it, to have suppressed any such intimation carefully. But this was not the character of the authors of the Gospel. Cunning was no quality of theirs. Of all writers in the world, they thought the least of providing against objections. Moreover, there is no clause in any one of them, that makes a profession of their having written prior to the Jewish wars, which a fraudulent purpose would have led them to pretend. They have done neither one thing nor the other; they have neither inserted any words, which might signify to the reader that their accounts were written *before* the destruction of Jerusalem, which a sophist would have done; nor have they dropped a hint of the completion of the prophecies recorded by them, which an *unde-signing* writer, writing *after* the event, could hardly on some or other of the many occasions that presented themselves, have missed of doing.

4. The admonitions<sup>a</sup> which Christ is represented to have given to his followers to save themselves by flight, are not easily accounted for, on the supposition of the prophecy being fabricated after the event. Either the Christians, when the siege approached, did make their escape from Jerusalem, or they did not: if they did, they must have had the prophecy amongst them: if they did not know of any such prediction at the time of the siege, if they did not take notice of any such warning, it was an improbable fiction, in a writer publishing his work near to that time, (which, on any even the lowest and most disadvantageous supposition, was the case with the Gospels now in our hands,) and addressing his work to Jews and to Jewish converts, (which Matthew certainly did,) to state that the followers of Christ had received admonition, of which they made no use when the occasion arrived, and of which experience then recent proved, that those, who were most concerned to

<sup>a</sup> "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh; then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; then let them which are in the midst of it depart out, and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." Luke xxi. 20, 21.

"When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then let them which be in Judea flee unto the mountains; let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Matt. xiv. 18.

know and regard them, were ignorant or negligent. Even if the prophecies came to the hands of the evangelists through no better vehicle than tradition, it must have been by a tradition which subsisted prior to the event. And to suppose that, without any authority whatever, without so much as even any tradition to guide them, they had forged these passages, is to impute to them a degree of fraud and imposture, from every appearance of which their compositions are as far removed as possible.

5. I think that, if the prophecies had been composed after the event, there would have been more specification. The names or descriptions of the enemy, the general, the emperor, would have been found in them. The designation of the time would have been more determinate. And I am fortified in this opinion by observing, that the counterfeited prophecies of the Sibylline oracles, of the twelve patriarchs, and I am inclined to believe, most others of the kind, are mere transcripts of the history, moulded into a prophetic form.

It is objected, that the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem is mixed, or connected, with expressions which relate to the final judgement of the world ; and so connected, as to lead an ordinary reader to expect, that these two events would not be far distant from each other. To which I answer, that the objection does not concern our present argument. If our Saviour actually foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, it is sufficient ; even although we should allow, that the narration of the prophecy had combined what had been said by him on kindred subjects, without accurately preserving the order, or always noticing the transition of the discourse.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE MORALITY OF THE GOSPEL.

IN stating the morality of the Gospel as an argument of its truth, I am willing to admit two points ; first, that the teaching of morality was not the primary design of the mission ; secondly, that morality, neither in the Gospel, nor in any other book, can be a subject, properly speaking, of discovery.

If I were to describe in a very few words the scope of Chris-



tianity, as a *revelation*<sup>a</sup>, I should say that it was to influence the conduct of human life, by establishing the proof of a future state of reward and punishment,—“to bring life and immortality to light.” The direct object, therefore, of the design is, to supply motives, and not rules; sanctions, and not precepts. And these were what mankind stood most in need of. The members of civilised society can, in all ordinary cases, judge tolerably well how they ought to act: but without a future state, or, which is the same thing, without credited evidence of that state, they want a *motive* to their duty; they want at least strength of motive, sufficient to bear up against the force of passion, and the temptation of present advantage. Their rules want authority. The most important service that can be rendered to human life, and that consequently, which, one might expect beforehand, would be the great end and office of a revelation from God, is to convey to the world authorized assurances of the reality of a future existence. And although in doing this, or by the ministry of the same person by whom this is done, moral precepts or examples, or illustrations of moral precepts, may be occasionally given, and be highly valuable, yet still they do not form the original purpose of the mission.

Secondly; morality, neither in the Gospel, nor in any other book, can be a subject of discovery, properly so called. By which proposition, I mean that there cannot, in morality, be any thing similar to what are called discoveries in natural philosophy, in the arts of life, and in some sciences; as the system of the universe, the circulation of the blood, the polarity of the magnet, the laws of gravitation, alphabetical writing, decimal arithmetic, and some other things of the same sort; facts, or proofs, or contrivances, before totally unknown and unthought of. Whoever, therefore, expects, in reading the New Testament, to be struck with discoveries in morals in the manner in

<sup>a</sup> Great and inestimably beneficial effects may accrue from the mission of Christ, and especially from his death, which do not belong to Christianity as a *revelation*: that is, they might have existed, and they might have been accomplished, though we had never, in this life, been made acquainted with them. These effects may be very extensive; they may be interesting even to other orders of intelligent beings. I think it is a general opinion, and one to which I have long come, that the beneficial effects of Christ's death extend to the whole human species. It was the redemption of *the world*. “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world;” 1 John ii. 2. Probably the future happiness, perhaps the future existence of the species, and more gracious terms of acceptance extended to *all*, might depend upon it or be procured by it. Now these effects, whatever they be, do not belong to Christianity as a *revelation*; because they exist with respect to those to whom *it is not revealed*.

which his mind was affected when he first came to the knowledge of the discoveries above mentioned ; or rather in the manner in which the world was affected by them, when they were first published ; expects what, as I apprehend, the nature of the subject renders it impossible that he should meet with. And the foundation of my opinion is this, that the qualities of actions depend entirely upon their effects, which effects must all along have been the subject of human experience.

When it is once settled, no matter upon what principle, that to do good is virtue, the rest is calculation. But since the calculation cannot be instituted concerning each particular action, we establish intermediate rules ; by which proceeding, the business of morality is much facilitated, for then it is concerning our rules alone that we need inquire, whether in their tendency they be beneficial ; concerning our actions, we have only to ask, whether they be agreeable to the rules. We refer actions to rules, and rules to public happiness. Now, in the formation of these rules, there is no place for discovery, properly so called, but there is ample room for the exercise of wisdom, judgement, and prudence.

As I wish to deliver argument rather than panegyric, I shall treat of the morality of the Gospel, in subjection to these observations. And after all, I think it such a morality, as, considering from whom it came, is most extraordinary ; and such as, without allowing some degree of reality to the character and pretensions of the religion, it is difficult to account for : or, to place the argument a little lower in the scale, it is such a morality as completely repels the supposition of its being the tradition of a barbarous age or of a barbarous people, of the religion being founded in folly, or of its being the production of craft ; and it repels also, in a great degree, the supposition of its having been the effusion of an enthusiastic mind.

The division, under which the subject may be most conveniently treated, is that of the things taught, and the manner of teaching.

Under the first head, I should willingly, if the limits and nature of my work admitted of it, transcribe into this chapter the whole of what has been said upon the morality of the Gospel, by the author of *The Internal Evidence of Christianity* ; because it perfectly agrees with my own opinion, and because it is impossible to say the same things so well. This acute ob-

server of human nature, and, as I believe, sincere convert to Christianity, appears to me to have made out satisfactorily the two following positions, viz.

I. That the Gospel omits some qualities, which have usually engaged the praises and admiration of mankind, but which, in reality, and in their general effects, have been prejudicial to human happiness.

II. That the Gospel has brought forwards some virtues, which possess the highest intrinsic value, but which have commonly been overlooked and contemned.

The first of these propositions he exemplifies in the instances of friendship, patriotism, active courage; in the sense in which these qualities are usually understood, and in the conduct which they often produce.

The second, in the instances of passive courage or endurance of sufferings, patience under affronts and injuries, humility, ir-resistance, placability.

The truth is, there are two opposite descriptions of character, under which mankind may generally be classed. The one possesses vigour, firmness, resolution; is daring and active, quick in its sensibilities, jealous of its fame, eager in its attachments, inflexible in its purpose, violent in its resentments.

The other, meek, yielding, complying, forgiving; not prompt to act, but willing to suffer; silent and gentle under rudeness and insult, suing for reconciliation, where others would demand satisfaction, giving way to the pushes of impudence, conceding and indulgent to the prejudices, the wrong-headedness, the intractability of those with whom it has to deal.

The former of these characters is, and ever hath been, the favourite of the world. It is the character of great men. There is a dignity in it which universally commands respect.

The latter is poor-spirited, tame, and abject. Yet so it hath happened, that, with the Founder of Christianity, this latter is the subject of his commendation, his precepts, his example; and that the former is so, in no part of its composition. This and nothing else, is the character designed in the following remarkable passages: "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also: and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain: love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them



which despitefully use you and persecute you." This certainly is not commonplace morality. It is very original. It shows at least (and it is for this purpose we produce it) that no two things can be more different than the Heroic and the Christian characters.

Now the author, to whom I refer, has not only marked this difference more strongly than any preceding writer, but has proved, in contradiction to first impressions, to popular opinion, to the encomiums of orators and poets, and even to the suffrages of historians and moralists, that the latter character possesses the most of true worth, both as being most difficult either to be acquired or sustained, and as contributing most to the happiness and tranquillity of social life. The state of his argument is as follows :

I. If this disposition were universal, the case is clear ; the world would be a society of friends. Whereas, if the other disposition were universal, it would produce a scene of universal contention. The world could not hold a generation of such men.

II. If, what is the fact, the disposition be partial ; if a few be actuated by it, amongst a multitude who are not ; in whatever degree it does prevail, in the same proportion it prevents, allays, and terminates quarrels, the great disturbers of human happiness, and the great sources of human misery, so far as man's happiness and misery depend upon man. Without this disposition, enmities must not only be frequent, but, once begun, must be eternal : for, each retaliation being a fresh injury, and, consequently, requiring a fresh *satisfaction*, no period can be assigned to the reciprocation of affronts, and to the progress of hatred, but that which closes the lives, or at least the intercourse, of the parties.

I would only add to these observations, that although the former of the two characters above described may be occasionally useful ; although, perhaps, a great general, or a great statesman, may be formed by it, and these may be instruments of important benefits to mankind, yet is this nothing more than what is true of many qualities, which are acknowledged to be vicious. *Envy* is a quality of this sort ; I know not a stronger stimulus to exertion ; many a scholar, many an artist, many a soldier, has been produced by it ; nevertheless, since in its general effects it is noxious, it is properly condemned, certainly is not praised, by sober moralists.

It was a portion of the same character as that we are defending, or rather of his love of the same character, which our Saviour displayed, in his repeated correction of the ambition of his disciples; his frequent admonitions, that greatness with them was to consist in humility; his censure of that love of distinction, and greediness of superiority, which the chief persons amongst his countrymen were wont on all occasions, great and little, to betray. "They (the Scribes and Pharisees) love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren: and call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven; neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ; but he that is greatest among *you*, shall be your servant: and whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted."<sup>a</sup> I make no further remark upon these passages, (because they are, in truth, only a repetition of the doctrine, different expressions of the principle, which we have already stated,) except that some of the passages, especially our Lord's advice to the guests at an entertainment<sup>b</sup>, seem to extend the rule to what we call *manners*; which was both regular in point of consistency, and not so much beneath the dignity of our Lord's mission as may at first sight be supposed, for bad manners are bad morals.

It is sufficiently apparent, that the precepts we have cited, or rather the disposition which these precepts inculcate, relate to personal conduct from personal motives; to cases in which men act from impulse, for themselves, and from themselves. When it comes to be considered, what is necessary to be done for the sake of the public, and out of a regard to the general welfare, (which consideration, for the most part, ought exclusively to govern the duties of men in public stations,) it comes to a case to which the rules do not belong. This distinction is plain; and if it were less so, the consequence would not be much felt: for it is very seldom that, in the intercourse of private life, men act with public views. The personal motives, from which they do act, the rule regulates.

The preference of the patient to the heroic character, which we have here noticed, and which the reader will find explained

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxiii. 6. See also Mark xii. 39. Luke xx. 46; xiv. 7.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xiv. 7.

at large in the work to which we have referred him, is a peculiarity in the Christian institution, which I propose as an argument of wisdom very much beyond the situation and natural character of the person who delivered it.

II. A *second* argument, drawn from the morality of the New Testament, is the stress which is laid by our Saviour upon the regulation of the thoughts. And I place this consideration next to the other, because they are connected. The other related to the malicious passions; this, to the voluptuous. Together, they comprehend the whole character.

“ Out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications,” &c.—“ These are the things which defile a man.”<sup>a</sup>

“ Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but *within* they are full of extortion and excess.—Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness; even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but *within* ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”<sup>b</sup>

And more particularly that strong expression<sup>c</sup>, “ Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

There can be no doubt with any reflecting mind, but that the propensities of our nature must be subject to regulation; but the question is, *where* the check ought to be placed, upon the thought, or only upon the action? In this question, our Saviour, in the texts here quoted, has pronounced a decisive judgement. He makes the control of thought essential. Internal purity with him is every thing. Now I contend that this is the only discipline which can succeed; in other words, that a moral system, which prohibits actions, but leaves the thoughts at liberty, will be ineffectual, and is therefore unwise. I know not how to go about the proof of a point, which depends upon experience, and upon a knowledge of the human constitution, better than by citing the judgement of persons, who appear to have given great attention to the subject, and to be well qualified to form a true opinion about it. Boerhaave, speaking of this very declaration of our Saviour, “ Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart,” and understanding it, as we do, to contain

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xv. 19.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. xxiii. 25. 27.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. v. 28.



an injunction to lay the check upon the thoughts, was wont to say, that, "our Saviour knew mankind better than Socrates." Haller, who has recorded this saying of Boerhaave, adds to it the following remarks of his own<sup>a</sup>: "It did not escape the observation of our Saviour, that the rejection of any evil thoughts was the best defence against vice: for when a debauched person fills his imagination with impure pictures, the licentious ideas which he recalls, fail not to stimulate his desires with a degree of violence which he cannot resist. This will be followed by gratification, unless some external obstacle should prevent him from the commission of a sin, which he had internally resolved on." "Every moment of time," says our author, "that is spent in meditations upon sin, increases the power of the dangerous object which has possessed our imagination." I suppose these reflections will be generally assented to.

III. Thirdly, had a teacher of morality been asked concerning a general principle of conduct, and for a short rule of life; and had he instructed the person who consulted him, "constantly to refer his actions to what he believed to be the will of his Creator, and constantly to have in view not his own interest and gratification alone, but the happiness and comfort of those about him," he would have been thought, I doubt not, in any age of the world, and in any, even the most improved, state of morals, to have delivered a judicious answer; because, by the first direction, he suggested the only motive which acts steadily and uniformly, in sight and out of sight, in familiar occurrences and under pressing temptations; and in the second, he corrected, what, of all tendencies in the human character, stands most in need of correction, *selfishness*, or a contempt of other men's conveniency and satisfaction. In estimating the value of a moral rule, we are to have regard not only to the particular duty, but the general spirit; not only to what it directs us to do, but to the character which a compliance with its direction is likely to form in us. So, in the present instance, the rule here recited will never fail to make him who obeys it *considerate*, not only of the rights, but of the feelings of other men, bodily and mental; in great matters and in small; of the ease, the accommodation, the self-complacency, of all with whom he has any concern, especially of all who are in his power, or dependent upon his will.

Now what, in the most applauded philosopher of the most

<sup>a</sup> Letters to his Daughter.

enlightened age of the world, would have been deemed worthy of his wisdom, and of his character, to say, our Saviour hath said, and upon just such an occasion as that which we have feigned.

“Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”<sup>a</sup>

The second precept occurs in Saint Matthew (xix. 16), on another occasion similar to this; and both of them, on a third similar occasion, in Luke (x. 27). In these two latter instances the question proposed was, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

Upon all these occasions, I consider the words of our Saviour as expressing precisely the same thing as what I have put into the mouth of the moral philosopher. Nor do I think that it detracts much from the merit of the answer, that these precepts are extant in the Mosaic code: for his laying his finger, if I may so say, upon these precepts; his drawing them out from the rest of that voluminous institution; his stating of them, not simply amongst the number, but as the greatest and the sum of all the others; in a word, his proposing of them to his hearers for their rule and principle, was our Saviour’s own.

And what our Saviour had said upon the subject, appears to me to have *fixed* the sentiment amongst his followers.

Saint Paul has it expressly, “If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;”<sup>b</sup> and again, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”<sup>c</sup>

Saint John, in like manner, “This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.”<sup>d</sup>

Saint Peter not very differently: “Seeing that ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.”<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxii. 35—40.

<sup>b</sup> Rom. xiii. 9.

<sup>c</sup> Gal. v. 14.

<sup>d</sup> 1 John iv. 21.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Peter i. 22.

And it is so well known, as to require no citations to verify it, that this love, or charity, or, in other words, regard to the welfare of others, runs in various forms through all the preceptive parts of the apostolic writings. It is the theme of all their exhortations, that with which their morality begins and ends, from which all their details and enumerations set out, and into which they return.

And that this temper, for some time at least, descended in its purity to succeeding Christians, is attested by one of the earliest and best of the remaining writings of the apostolical fathers, the epistle of the Roman Clement. The meekness of the Christian character reigns throughout the whole of that excellent piece. The occasion called for it. It was to compose the dissensions of the church of Corinth. And the venerable hearer of the apostles does not fall short, in the display of this principle, of the finest passages of their writings. He calls to the remembrance of the Corinthian church its former character, in which "ye were all of you," he tells them, "humble-minded, not boasting of any thing, desiring rather to be subject than to govern, to give than to receive, being content with the portion God had dispensed to you, and hearkening diligently to his word; ye were enlarged in your bowels, having his sufferings always before your eyes. Ye contended day and night for the whole brotherhood, that with compassion and a good conscience the number of his elect might be saved. Ye were sincere, and without offence, towards each other. Ye bewailed every one his neighbour's sins, esteeming their defects your own."<sup>a</sup> His prayer for them was for the "return of peace, long-suffering, and patience."<sup>b</sup> And his advice to those, who might have been the occasion of difference in the society, is conceived in the true spirit, and with a perfect knowledge, of the Christian character: "Who is there among you that is generous? who that is compassionate? who that has any charity? Let him say, If this sedition, this contention, and these schisms, be upon my account, I am ready to depart, to go away whithersoever ye please, and do whatsoever ye shall command me; only let the flock of Christ be in peace with the elders who are set over it. He that shall do this, shall get to himself a very great honour in the Lord; and there is no place but what will be ready to receive him; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. These things they, who

<sup>a</sup> Ep. Clem. Rom. c. 2; Abp. Wake's Translation.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. c. 53.



have their conversation towards God, not to be repented of, both have done, and will always be ready to do.”<sup>a</sup>

This sacred principle, this earnest recommendation of forbearance, lenity, and forgiveness, mixes with all the writings of that age. There are more quotations in the apostolical fathers, of texts which relate to these points, than of any other. Christ’s sayings had struck them. “Not rendering,” said Polycarp, the disciple of John, “evil for evil, or railing for railing, or striking for striking, or cursing for cursing.”<sup>b</sup> Again, speaking of some whose behaviour had given great offence, “Be ye moderate,” says he, “on this occasion, and look not upon such as enemies, but call them back as suffering and erring members, that ye save your whole body.”<sup>c</sup>

“Be ye mild at their anger,” saith Ignatius, the companion of Polycarp, “humble at their boastings, to their blasphemies return your prayers, to their error your firmness in the faith; when they are cruel, be ye gentle; not endeavouring to imitate their ways, let us be their brethren in all kindness and moderation: but let us be followers of the Lord; for who was ever more unjustly used, more destitute, more despised?”

IV. A fourth quality, by which the morality of the Gospel is distinguished, is the exclusion of regard to fame and reputation.

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.”<sup>d</sup>

“When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”<sup>e</sup>

And the rule, by parity of reason, is extended to all other virtues.

I do not think, that either in these, or in any other passage of the New Testament, the pursuit of fame is stated as a vice; it is only said that an action, to be virtuous, must be independent of it. I would also observe, that it is not publicity, but ostentation, which is prohibited; not the mode, but the motive, of the action, which is regulated. A good man will prefer that mode, as well as those objects of his beneficence, by which he can produce the greatest effect; and the view of this purpose may dictate sometimes publication, and sometimes concealment. Either the one or the other may be the *mode* of the action, ac-

<sup>a</sup> Ep. Clem. Rom. c. 54; Abp. Wake’s Translation.

<sup>b</sup> Pol. Ep. ad Phil. c. 2.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. c. 11.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. vi. 1.

<sup>e</sup> Ibid. 6.

ording as the end to be promoted by it appears to require, But from the *motive*, the reputation of the deed, and the fruits and advantage of that reputation to ourselves, must be shut out, or, in whatever proportion they are not so, the action in that proportion fails of being virtuous.

This exclusion of regard to human opinion, is a difference, not so much in the duties, to which the teachers of virtue would persuade mankind, as in the manner and topics of persuasion. And in this view the difference is great. When *we* set about to give advice, our lectures are full of the advantages of character, of the regard that is due to appearances and to opinion; of what the world, especially of what the good or great, will think and say; of the value of public esteem, and of the qualities by which men acquire it. Widely different from this was our Saviour's instruction; and the difference was founded upon the best reasons. For, however the care of reputation, the authority of public opinion, or even of the opinion of good men, the satisfaction of being well received and well thought of, the benefit of being known and distinguished, are topics to which we are fain to have recourse in our exhortations; the true virtue is that which discards these considerations absolutely, and which retires from them all to the single internal purpose of pleasing God. This at least was the virtue which our Saviour taught. And in teaching this, he not only confined the views of his followers to the proper measure and principle of human duty, but acted in consistency with his office as a monitor from heaven.

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Next to what our Saviour taught, may be considered the manner of his teaching; which was extremely peculiar, yet, I think, precisely adapted to the peculiarity of his character and situation. His lessons did not consist of disquisitions; of any thing like moral essays, or like sermons, or like set treatises upon the several points which he mentioned. When he delivered a precept, it was seldom that he added any proof or argument; still more seldom, that he accompanied it with what all precepts require, limitations and distinctions. His instructions were conceived in short, emphatic, sententious rules, in occasional reflections, or in round maxims. I do not think that this was a natural, or would have been a proper method for a philosopher or a moralist; or that it is a method which can be successfully imitated by us. But I contend that it was suitable to the cha-

racter which Christ assumed, and to the situation in which, as a teacher, he was placed. He produced himself as a messenger from God. He put the truth of what he taught upon authority <sup>a</sup>. In the choice, therefore, of his mode of teaching, the purpose by him to be consulted was *impression*: because conviction, which forms the principal end of our discourses, was to arise in the minds of his followers from a different source, from their respect to his person and authority. Now, for the purpose of impression singly and exclusively, (I repeat again, that we are not here to consider the convincing of the understanding,) I know nothing which would have so great force as strong ponderous maxims, frequently urged and frequently brought back to the thoughts of the hearers. I know nothing that could in this view be said better, than "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you:" "The first and great commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It must also be remembered, that our Lord's ministry, upon the supposition either of one year or three, compared with his work, was of short duration; that, within this time, he had many places to visit, various audiences to address; that his person was generally besieged by crowds of followers; that he was, sometimes, driven away from the place where he was teaching by persecution, and, at other times, thought fit to withdraw himself from the commotions of the populace. Under these circumstances, nothing appears to have been so practicable, or likely to be so efficacious, as leaving, wherever he came, concise lessons of duty. These circumstances at least show the necessity he was under of comprising what he delivered within a small compass. In particular, his sermon upon the mount ought always to be considered with a view to these observations. The question is not, whether a fuller, a more accurate, a more systematic, or a more argumentative discourse, upon morals might not have been pronounced; but whether more could have been said in the same room better adapted to the exigencies of the hearers, or better calculated for the purpose of impression? Seen in this light, it has always appeared to me to be admirable. Dr. Lardner thought that this discourse was made up of what Christ had said at different times, and on different occasions, several of which occasions are noticed in Saint Luke's

<sup>a</sup> *I say unto you, Swear not at all: I say unto you, Resist not evil; I say unto you, Love your enemies.—Matt. v. 34. 39. 44.*



narrative. I can perceive no reason for this opinion. I believe that our Lord delivered this discourse at one time and place, in the manner related by Saint Matthew, and that he repeated the same rules and maxims at different times, as opportunity or occasion suggested; that they were often in his mouth, and were repeated to different audiences, and in various conversations.

It is incidental to this mode of moral instruction, which proceeds not by proof but upon authority, not by disquisition but by precept, that the rules will be conceived in absolute terms, leaving the application, and the distinctions that attend it, to the reason of the hearer. It is likewise to be expected that they will be delivered in terms by so much the more forcible and energetic, as they have to encounter natural or general propensities. It is further also to be remarked, that many of those strong instances, which appear in our Lord's sermon, such as, "If any man will smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also:" "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also:" "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain:" though they appear in the form of specific precepts, are intended as descriptive of disposition and character. A specific compliance with the precepts would be of little value, but the disposition which they inculcate is of the highest. He who should content himself with waiting for the occasion, and with literally observing the rule when the occasion offered, would do nothing, or worse than nothing: but he who considers the character and disposition which is hereby inculcated, and places that disposition before him as the model to which he should bring his own, takes, perhaps, the best possible method of improving the benevolence, and of calming and rectifying the vices of his temper.

If it be said that this disposition is unattainable, I answer, so is all perfection: ought therefore a moralist to recommend imperfections? One excellency, however, of our Saviour's rules, is, that they are either never mistaken, or never so mistaken as to do harm. I could feign a hundred cases, in which the literal application of the rule, "of doing to others as we would that others should do unto us," might mislead us: but I never yet met with the man who was actually misled by it. Notwithstanding that our Lord bade his followers, "not to resist evil," and to "forgive the enemy who should trespass against them, not till seven times, but

till seventy times seven," the Christian world has hitherto suffered little by too much placability or forbearance. I would repeat once more, what has already been twice remarked, that these rules were designed to regulate personal conduct from personal motives, and for this purpose alone.

I think that these observations will assist us greatly in placing our Saviour's conduct, as a moral teacher, in a proper point of view: especially when it is considered, that to deliver moral disquisitions was no part of his design,—to teach morality at all was only a subordinate part of it; his great business being to supply what was much more wanting than lessons of morality, stronger moral sanctions, and clearer assurances of a future judgement<sup>a</sup>.

The *parables* of the New Testament are, many of them, such as would have done honour to any book in the world: I do not mean in style and diction, but in the choice of the subjects, in the structure of the narratives, in the aptness, propriety, and force of the circumstances woven into them; and in some, as that of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Pharisee and the Publican, in an union of pathos and simplicity, which, in the best productions of human genius, is the fruit only of a much exercised and well-cultivated judgement.

*The Lord's Prayer*, for a succession of solemn thoughts, for fixing the attention upon a few great points, for suitability to every condition, for sufficiency, for conciseness without obscurity, for the weight and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival.

From whence did these come? Whence had this man his wisdom? Was our Saviour, in fact, a well-instructed philosopher, whilst he is represented to us as an illiterate peasant? Or shall we say that some early Christians of taste and education composed these pieces and ascribed them to Christ?

<sup>a</sup> Some appear to require in a religious system, or, in the books which profess to deliver that system, minute directions for every case and occurrence that may arise. This, say they, is necessary, to render a revelation perfect, especially one which has for its object the regulation of human conduct. Now, how prolix, and yet how incomplete and unavailing, such an attempt must have been, is proved by one notable example: "The Indoo and Mussulman religion are institutes of civil law, regulating the minutest questions both of property, and of all questions which come under the cognizance of the magistrate. And to what length details of this kind are necessarily carried, when once begun, may be understood from an anecdote of the Mussulman code, which we have received from the most respectable authority, that not less than *seventy-five thousand* traditional precepts have been promulgated." (Hamilton's translation of Hedaya, or Guide.)

Beside all other incredibilities in this account, I answer, with Dr. Jortin, that they *could not* do it. No specimens of composition, which the Christians of the first century have left us, authorise us to believe that they were equal to the task. And how little qualified the Jews, the countrymen and companions of Christ, were to assist him in the undertaking, may be judged of from the traditions and writings of theirs which were the nearest to that age. The whole collection of the Talmud is one continued proof, into what follies they fell whenever they left their Bible; and how little capable they were of furnishing out such lessons as Christ delivered.

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But there is still another view, in which our Lord's discourses deserve to be considered; and that is, in their *negative* character,—not in what they did, but in what they did not, contain. Under this head, the following reflections appear to me to possess some weight.

I. They exhibit no particular description of the invisible world. The future happiness of the good, and the misery of the bad, which is all we want to be assured of, is directly and positively affirmed, and is represented by metaphors and comparisons, which were plainly intended as metaphors and comparisons, and as nothing more. As to the rest, a solemn reserve is maintained. The question concerning the woman who had been married to seven brothers, “Whose shall she be on the resurrection?” was of a nature calculated to have drawn from Christ a more circumstantial account of the state of the human species in their future existence. He cut short, however, the inquiry by an answer, which at once rebuked intruding curiosity, and was agreeable to the best apprehensions we are able to form upon the subject, viz. “That they who are accounted worthy of that resurrection, shall be as the angels of God in heaven.” I lay a stress upon this reserve, because it repels the suspicion of enthusiasm: for enthusiasm is wont to expatiate upon the condition of the departed, above all other subjects; and with a wild particularity. It is moreover a topic which is always listened to with greediness. The teacher, therefore, whose principal purpose is to draw upon himself attention, is sure to be full of it. The Koran of Mahomet is half made up of it.

II. Our Lord enjoined no austerities. He not only enjoined



none as absolute duties, but he recommended none as carrying men to a higher degree of Divine favour. Place Christianity, in this respect, by the side of all institutions which have been founded in the fanaticism, either of their author, or of his first followers: or rather compare in this respect, Christianity as it came from Christ, with the same religion after it fell into other hands; with the extravagant merit very soon ascribed to celibacy, solitude, voluntary poverty; with the rigours of an ascetic, and the vows of a monastic life; the hair shirt, the watchings, the midnight prayers, the obmutescence, the gloom and mortification of religious orders, and of those who aspired to religious perfection.

III. Our Saviour uttered no impassioned devotion. There was no heat in his piety, or in the language in which he expressed it; no vehement or rapturous ejaculations, no violent urgency, in his prayers. The Lord's Prayer is a model of calm devotion. His words in the garden are unaffected expressions, of a deep indeed, but sober piety. He never appears to have been worked up into any thing like that elation, or that emotion of spirits, which is occasionally observed in most of those, to whom the name of enthusiast can in any degree be applied. I feel a respect for Methodists, because I believe that there is to be found amongst them much sincere piety, and availing, though not always well-informed, Christianity: yet I never attended a meeting of theirs, but I came away with the reflection, how different what I heard was from what I read! I do not mean in doctrine, with which at present I have no concern, but in manner; how different from the calmness, the sobriety, the good sense, and I may add, the strength and authority, of our Lord's discourses!

IV. It is very usual with the human mind, to substitute forwardness and fervency in a particular cause, for the merit of general and regular morality: and it is natural, and politic also, in the leader of a sect or party, to encourage such a disposition in his followers. Christ did not overlook this turn of thought; yet, though avowedly placing himself at the head of a new institution, he notices it only to condemn it. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast

out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ? And then will I profess unto you, I never knew you : depart from me *ye that work iniquity.*"\* So far was the Author of Christianity from courting the attachment of his followers by any sacrifice of principle, or by a condescension to the errors which even zeal in his service might have inspired. This was a proof both of sincerity and judgement.

V. Nor, fifthly, did he fall in with any of the depraved fashions of his country, or with the natural bias of his own education. Bred up a Jew, under a religion extremely technical, in an age and amongst a people more tenacious of the ceremonies than of any other part of that religion, he delivered an institution, containing less of ritual, and that more simple, than is to be found in any religion which ever prevailed amongst mankind. We have known, I do allow, examples of an enthusiasm, which has swept away all external ordinances before it. But this spirit certainly did not dictate our Saviour's conduct, either in his treatment of the religion of his country, or in the formation of his own institution. In both he displayed the soundness and moderation of his judgement. He censured an overstrained scrupulousness, or perhaps an affectation of scrupulousness, about the Sabbath : but how did he censure it ? not by condemning or decrying the institution itself, but by declaring that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath ;" that is to say, that the Sabbath was to be subordinate to its purpose, and that that purpose was the real good of those who were the subjects of the law. The same concerning the nicety of some of the Pharisees, in paying tithes of the most trifling articles, accompanied with a neglect of justice, fidelity, and mercy. He finds fault with them for misplacing their anxiety. He does not speak disrespectfully of the law of tithes, nor of their observance of it ; but he assigns to each class of duties its proper station in the scale of moral importance. All this might be expected perhaps from a well-instructed, cool, and judicious philosopher, but was not to be looked for from an illiterate Jew ; certainly not from an impetuous enthusiast.

VI. Nothing could be more quibbling, than were the comments and expositions of the Jewish doctors, at that time ; nothing so puerile as their distinctions. Their evasion of the

\* Matt. vii. 21, 22.

fifth commandment, their exposition of the law of oaths, are specimens of the bad taste in morals which then prevailed. Whereas, in a numerous collection of our Saviour's apophthegms, many of them referring to sundry precepts of the Jewish law, there is not to be found one example of sophistry, or of false subtilty, or of any thing approaching thereunto.

VII. The national temper of the Jews was intolerant, narrow-minded, and excluding. In Jesus, on the contrary, whether we regard his lessons or his example, we see not only benevolence, but benevolence the most enlarged and comprehensive. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the very point of the story is, that the person relieved by him was the national and religious enemy of his benefactor. Our Lord declared the equity of the Divine administration, when he told the Jews (what, probably, they were surprised to hear,) "That many should come from the east and west, and should sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but that the children of the kingdom should be cast into outer darkness."<sup>a</sup> His reproof of the hasty zeal of his disciples, who would needs call down fire from heaven to revenge an affront put upon their Master, shows the lenity of his character, and of his religion; and his opinion of the manner in which the most unreasonable opponents ought to be treated, or at least of the manner in which they ought not to be treated. The terms, in which his rebuke was conveyed, deserve to be noticed:—"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."<sup>b</sup>

VIII. Lastly, amongst the negative qualities of our religion, as it came out of the hands of its Founder and his apostles, we may reckon its complete abstraction from all views either of ecclesiastical or civil policy; or, to meet a language much in fashion with some men, from the politics either of priests or statesmen. Christ's declaration, that "his kingdom was not of this world," recorded by Saint John; his evasion of the question, whether it was lawful or not to give tribute unto Cæsar, mentioned by the three other evangelists; his reply to an application that was made to him, to interpose his authority in a question of property; "Man, who made me a ruler or a judge over you?" ascribed to him by Saint Luke; his declining to exercise the office of a criminal judge in the case of the woman taken in adultery, as related by John, are all intelligible significations of our Saviour's sentiments upon this head. And with respect to

<sup>a</sup> Matt. viii. 11. . .

<sup>b</sup> Luke, ix. 55.



*politics*, in the usual sense of that word, or discussions concerning different forms of government, Christianity declines every question upon the subject. Whilst politicians are disputing about monarchies, aristocracies, and republics, the Gospel is alike applicable, useful, and friendly to them all; inasmuch as, 1st, it tends to make men virtuous, and as it is easier to govern good men than bad men under any constitution; as, 2dly, it states obedience to government in ordinary cases, to be not merely a submission to force, but a duty of conscience; as, 3dly, it induces dispositions favourable to public tranquillity, a Christian's chief care being to pass quietly through this world to a better; as, 4thly, it prays for communities, and for the governors of communities, of whatever description or denomination they be, with a solicitude and fervency proportioned to the influence which they possess upon human happiness. All which, in my opinion, is just as it should be. Had there been more to be found in Scripture of a political nature, or convertible to political purposes, the worst use would have been made of it, on whichever side it seemed to lie.

When, therefore, we consider Christ as a moral teacher (remembering that this was only a secondary part of his office; and that morality, by the nature of the subject, does not admit of discovery, properly so called;)—when we consider either what he taught, or what he did not teach, either the substance or the manner of his instruction; his preference of solid to popular virtues, of a character which is commonly despised to a character which is universally extolled; his placing, in our licentious vices, the check in the right place, *viz.* upon the thoughts; his collecting of human duty into two well-devised rules, his repetition of these rules, the stress he laid upon them, especially in comparison with positive duties, and his fixing thereby the sentiments of his followers; his exclusion of all regard to reputation in our devotion and alms, and, by parity of reason, in our other virtues;—when we consider that his instructions were delivered in a form calculated for impression, the precise purpose in his situation to be consulted; and that they were illustrated by parables, the choice and structure of which would have been admired in any composition whatever;—when we observe him free from the usual symptoms of enthusiasm, heat and vehemence in devotion, austerity in institutions, and a wild particularity in the descrip-

tion of a future state ; free also from the depravities of his age and country ; without superstition amongst the most superstitious of men, yet not decrying positive distinctions or external observances, but soberly calling them to the principle of their establishment, and to their place in the scale of human duties ; without sophistry or trifling, amidst teachers remarkable for nothing so much as frivolous subtilties and quibbling expositions ; candid and liberal in his judgement of the rest of mankind, although belonging to a people who affected a separate claim to Divine favour, and in consequence of that opinion, prone to uncharitableness, partiality, and restriction ;—when we find in his religion, no scheme of building up a hierarchy, or of ministering to the views of human governments ;—in a word, when we compare Christianity, as it came from its Author, either with other religions, or with itself in other hands, the most reluctant understanding will be induced to acknowledge the probity, I think also the good sense, of those to whom it owes its origin ; and that some regard is due to the testimony of such men, when they declare their knowledge that the religion proceeded from God ; and when they appeal, for the truth of their assertion, to miracles which they wrought, or which they saw.

Perhaps the qualities which we observe in the religion, may be thought to prove something more. They would have been extraordinary, had the religion come from any person ; from the person from whom it did come, they are exceedingly so. What was Jesus in external appearance ? A Jewish peasant, the son of a carpenter, living with his father and mother in a remote province of Palestine, until the time that he produced himself in his public character. He had no master to instruct or prompt him ; he had read no books, but the works of Moses and the prophets ; he had visited no polished cities ; he had received no lessons from Socrates or Plato,—nothing to form in him a taste or judgement different from that of the rest of his countrymen, and of persons of the same rank of life with himself. Supposing it to be true, which it is not, that all his points of morality might be picked out of Greek and Roman writings, they were writings which *he* had never seen. Supposing them to be no more than what some or other had taught in various times and places, he could not collect them together.

Who were his coadjutors in the undertaking,—the persons into whose hands the religion came after his death ? A few

fishermen upon the lake of Tiberias, persons just as uneducated, and, for the purpose of framing rules of morality, as unpromising as himself. Suppose the mission to be real, all this is accounted for; the unsuitableness of the authors to the production, of the characters to the undertaking, no longer surprises us: but without *reality*, it is very difficult to explain, how such a system should proceed from such persons. Christ was not like any other carpenter; the apostles were not like any other fishermen.

But the subject is not exhausted by these observations. That portion of it, which is most reducible to points of argument, has been stated, and, I trust, truly. There are, however, some topics, of a more diffuse nature, which yet deserve to be proposed to the reader's attention.

The *character of Christ* is a part of the morality of the Gospel: one strong observation upon which is, that, neither as represented by his followers, nor as attacked by his enemies, is he charged with any personal vice. This remark is as old as Origen: "Though innumerable lies and calumnies had been forged against the venerable Jesus, none had dared to charge him with an intemperance."<sup>a</sup> Not a reflection upon his moral character, not an imputation or suspicion of any offence against purity and chastity, appears for five hundred years after his birth. This faultlessness is more peculiar than we are apt to imagine. Some stain pollutes the morals or the morality of almost every other teacher, and of every other lawgiver<sup>b</sup>. Zeno the stoic, and Diogenes the cynic, fell into the foulest impurities; of which also Socrates himself was more than suspected. Solon forbade unnatural crimes to slaves. Lycurgus tolerated theft as a part of education. Plato recommended a community of women. Aristotle maintained the general right of making war upon barbarians. The elder Cato was remarkable for the ill usage of his slaves; the younger gave up the person of his wife. One loose principle is found in almost all the Pagan moralists; is distinctly, however, perceived in the writings of Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus; and that is, the allowing, and even the recommending to their disciples, a compliance with the religion, and with the religious rites, of every country

<sup>a</sup> Or. Ep. Cels. l. 3. num. 36. ed. Bened.

<sup>b</sup> See many instances collected by Grotius, de Veritate Christianæ Religionis, in the notes to his second book, p. 116. Pocock's edition.



into which they came. In speaking of the founders of new institutions, we cannot forget Mahomet. His licentious transgressions of his own licentious rules ; his abuse of the character which he assumed, and of the power which he had acquired, for the purposes of personal and privileged indulgence ; his avowed claim of a special permission from heaven, of unlimited sensuality, is known to every reader, as it is confessed by every writer, of the Moslem story.

Secondly, in the histories which are left us of Jesus Christ, although very short, and although dealing in narrative, and not in observation or panegyric, we perceive, beside the absence of every appearance of vice, traces of devotion, humility, benignity, mildness, patience, prudence. I speak of *traces* of these qualities, because the qualities themselves are to be collected from incidents ; inasmuch as the terms are never used of Christ in the Gospels, nor is any formal character of him drawn in any part of the New Testament.

Thus we see the *devoutness* of his mind, in his frequent retirement to solitary prayer<sup>a</sup> ; in his habitual giving of thanks<sup>b</sup> ; in his reference of the beauties and operations of nature to the bounty of Providence<sup>c</sup> ; in his earnest addresses to his Father, more particularly that short but solemn one before the raising of Lazarus from the dead<sup>d</sup> ; and in the deep piety of his behaviour in the garden, on the last evening of his life<sup>e</sup> : his *humility*, in his constant reproof of contentions for superiority<sup>f</sup> : the *benignity* and affectionateness of his temper, in his kindness to children<sup>g</sup> ; in the tears which he shed over his falling country<sup>h</sup>, and upon the death of his friend<sup>i</sup> ; in his noticing of the widow's mite<sup>k</sup> ; in his parables of the good Samaritan, of the ungrateful servant, and of the Pharisee and publican, of which parables no one but a man of humanity could have been the author : the *mildness* and lenity of his character is discovered, in his rebuke of the forward zeal of his disciples at the Samaritan village<sup>l</sup>, in his expostulation with Pilate<sup>m</sup> ; in his prayer for his enemies at the moment of his suffering<sup>n</sup>, which, though it has been since very properly and frequently imitated, was then, I apprehend, new. His *prudence* is discerned, where prudence is most

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xiv. 23. Luke ix. 28. Matt. xxvi. 36.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xi. 25. Mark viii. 6. John vi. 23. Luke xxii. 17.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. vi. 26—28. <sup>d</sup> John xi. 41. <sup>e</sup> Matt. xxvi. 36—47.

<sup>g</sup> Mark x. 16.

<sup>h</sup> Luke xix. 41.

<sup>i</sup> John xi. 35.

<sup>f</sup> Mark ix. 33.

<sup>k</sup> Mark xii. 42.

<sup>l</sup> Luke ix. 55.

<sup>m</sup> John xix. 11.

<sup>n</sup> Luke xxiii. 34.

wanted, in his conduct on trying occasions, and in answers to artful questions. Of these, the following are examples:—His withdrawing, in various instances, from the first symptoms of tumult<sup>a</sup>, and with the express care, as appears from Saint Matthew<sup>b</sup>, of carrying on his ministry in quietness; his declining of every species of interference with the civil affairs of the country, which disposition is manifested by his behaviour in the case of the woman caught in adultery<sup>c</sup>, and in his repulse of the application which was made to him, to interpose his decision about a disputed inheritance<sup>d</sup>: his judicious, yet as it should seem, unprepared answers, will be confessed in the case of the Roman tribute<sup>e</sup>; in the difficulty concerning the interfering relations of a future state, as proposed to him in the instance of a woman who had married seven brethren<sup>f</sup>; and, more especially, in his reply to those who demanded from him an explanation of the authority by which he acted, which reply consisted, in propounding a question to them, situated between the very difficulties into which they were insidiously endeavouring to draw him<sup>g</sup>.

Our Saviour's lessons, beside what has already been remarked in them, touch, and that oftentimes by very affecting representations, upon some of the most interesting topics of human duty, and of human meditation; upon the principles, by which the decisions of the last day will be regulated<sup>h</sup>; upon the superior, or rather the supreme importance of religion<sup>i</sup>; upon penitence, by the most pressing calls and the most encouraging invitations<sup>k</sup>; upon self-denial<sup>l</sup>, watchfulness<sup>m</sup>, placability<sup>n</sup>, confidence in God<sup>o</sup>, the value of spiritual, that is, of mental worship<sup>p</sup>, the necessity of moral obedience, and the directing of that obedience to the spirit and principle of the law, instead of seeking for evasions in a technical construction of its terms<sup>q</sup>.

If we extend our argument to other parts of the New Testament, we may offer, as amongst the best and shortest rules of life, or, which is the same thing, descriptions of virtue, that have ever been delivered, the following passages:

“Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xiv. 22. Luke v. 15, 16. John v. 13. vi. 15.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. xii. 19.

<sup>c</sup> John viii. 1.

<sup>d</sup> Luke xii. 14.

<sup>e</sup> Matt xxii. 19.

<sup>f</sup> Ib. 28.

<sup>g</sup> Matt. xxi. 23, et seq.

<sup>h</sup> Ib. xxv. 31, et seq.

<sup>i</sup> Mark viii. 35. Matt. vi. 31—33. Luke xii. 4, 5, 16—21.

<sup>k</sup> Luke xv.

<sup>l</sup> Matt. v. 29. <sup>m</sup> Mark xiii. 37. Matt. xxiv. 42.—xxv. 13.

<sup>n</sup> Luke xvii. 4. Matt. xviii. 33, et seq.

<sup>o</sup> Matt. vi. 25—30.

<sup>p</sup> John iv. 23, 24.

<sup>q</sup> Matt. v. 21.

this; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”<sup>a</sup>

“Now the end of the commandment is, charity, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.”<sup>b</sup>

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”<sup>c</sup>

Enumerations of virtues and vices, and those sufficiently accurate, and unquestionably just, are given by St. Paul to his converts in three several epistles.”<sup>d</sup>

The relative duties of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, of Christian teachers and their flocks, of governors and their subjects, are set forth by the same writer<sup>e</sup>, not indeed with the copiousness, the detail, or the distinctness of a moralist, who should, in these days, sit down to write chapters upon the subject, but with the leading rules and principles in each; and, above all, with truth and with authority.

Lastly, the whole volume of the New Testament is replete with *piety*; with, what were almost unknown to Heathen moralists, *devotional virtues*, the most profound veneration of the Deity, an habitual sense of his bounty and protection, a firm confidence in the final result of his counsels and dispensations, a disposition to resort, upon all occasions, to his mercy, for the supply of human wants, for assistance in danger, for relief from pain, for the pardon of sin.

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## CHAPTER III.

### THE CANDOUR OF THE WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

I MAKE this candour to consist, in their putting down many passages, and noticing many circumstances, which no writer whatever was likely to have forged; and which no writer would have chosen to appear in his book, who had been careful to present the story in the most unexceptionable form, or who had

<sup>a</sup> James i. 27.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Tim. i. 5.

<sup>c</sup> Tit. ii. 11, 12.

<sup>d</sup> Gal. v. 19. Col. iii. 12. 1 Cor. xiii.

<sup>e</sup> Eph. v. 33. vi. 1. 5. 2 Cor. vi. 6, 7. Rom. xiii.



thought himself at liberty to carve and mould the particulars of that story, according to his choice, or according to his judgment of the effect.

A strong and well-known example of the fairness of the evangelists, offers itself in their account of Christ's resurrection, namely, in their unanimously stating, that, after he was risen, he appeared to his disciples alone. I do not mean that they have used the exclusive word *alone* ; but that all the instances which they have recorded of his appearance, are instances of appearance to his disciples ; that their reasonings upon it, and allusions to it, are confined to this supposition ; and that, by one of them, Peter is made to say, " Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."<sup>a</sup> The most common understanding must have perceived, that the history of the resurrection would have come with more advantage, if they had related that Jesus appeared, after he was risen, to his foes as well as his friends, to the scribes and Pharisees, the Jewish council, and the Roman governor : or even if they had asserted the public appearance of Christ in general unqualified terms, without noticing, as they have done, the presence of his disciples on each occasion, and noticing it in such a manner as to lead their readers to suppose that none but disciples were present. They *could* have represented in one way as well as the other. And if their point had been, to have their religion believed, whether true or false ; if they had fabricated the story, *ab initio* ; or if they had been disposed either to have delivered their testimony as witnesses, or to have worked up their materials and information as historians, in such a manner as to render their narrative as specious and unobjectionable as they could ; in a word, if they had thought of any thing but of the truth of the case, as they understood and believed it ; they would, in their account of Christ's several appearances after his resurrection, at least have omitted this restriction. At this distance of time, the account as we have it is perhaps more credible than it would have been the other way ; because this manifestation of the historians' candour, is of more advantage to their testimony, than the difference in the circumstances of the account would have been to the nature of the

<sup>a</sup> Acts x. 40, 41.

evidence. But this is an effect which the evangelists would not foresee: and I think that it was by no means the case at the time when the books were composed.

Mr. Gibbon has argued for the genuineness of the Koran, from the confessions which it contains, to the apparent disadvantage of the Mahometan cause<sup>a</sup>. The same defence vindicates the genuineness of our Gospels, and without prejudice to the cause at all.

There are some other instances in which the evangelists honestly relate what, they must have perceived, would make against them.

Of this kind is John the Baptist's message, preserved by Saint Matthew (xi. 2), and Saint Luke (vii. 18): "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" To confess, still more to state, that John the Baptist had his doubts concerning the character of Jesus, could not but afford a handle to cavil and objection. But truth, like honesty, neglects appearances. The same observation, perhaps, holds concerning the apostacy of Judas<sup>b</sup>.

John vi. 66. "From that time, many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Was it the part of a writer, who dealt in suppression and disguise, to put down *this* anecdote?

Or this, which Matthew has preserved (xii. 58)? "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."

Again, in the same evangelist (v. 17, 18): "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to

<sup>a</sup> Vol. ix. c. 50, note 96.

<sup>b</sup> I had once placed amongst these examples of fair concession, the remarkable words of Saint Matthew, in his account of Christ's appearance upon the Galilean mountain: "And when they saw him, they worshipped him; *but some doubted.*"\* I have since, however, been convinced by what is observed concerning this passage in Dr. Townshend's discourse† upon the resurrection, that the transaction, as related by Saint Matthew, was really this: "Christ appeared first *at a distance*; the greater part of the company, the moment they saw him, worshipped, but some as yet, *i. e.* upon this first distant view of his person, doubted; whereupon Christ *came up*‡ to them, and spake to them," &c.: that the doubt, therefore, was a doubt only at first, for a moment, and upon his being seen at a distance, and was afterwards dispelled by his nearer approach, and by his entering into conversation with them.

\* Chap. xxviii. 17.

† Page 177.

‡ Saint Matthew's words are, *Και προσελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς*. This intimates, that when he first appeared, it was at a distance, at least, from many of the spectators. *Ib.* p. 197.

destroy but to fulfil; for, verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." At the time the Gospels were written, the apparent tendency of Christ's mission was to diminish the authority of the Mosaic code, and it was so considered by the Jews themselves. It is very improbable, therefore, that, without the constraint of truth, Matthew should have ascribed a saying to Christ, which, *primo intuitu*, militated with the judgement of the age in which his Gospel was written. Marcion thought this text so objectionable, that he altered the words, so as to invert the sense<sup>a</sup>.

Once more (Acts xxv. 18): "They brought none accusation against him, of such things as I supposed; but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Nothing could be more in the character of a Roman governor than these words. But that is not precisely the point I am concerned with. A mere panegyrist, or a dishonest narrator, would not have represented his cause, or have made a great magistrate represent it, in this manner, *i. e.* in terms not a little disparaging, and bespeaking, on his part, much unconcern and indifference about the matter. The same observation may be repeated of the speech, which is ascribed to Gallio (Acts xviii. 15): "If it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters."

Lastly, where do we discern a stronger mark of candour, or less disposition to extol and magnify, than in the conclusion of the same history? in which the evangelist, after relating that Paul, on his first arrival at Rome, preached to the Jews from morning until evening, adds, "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not."

The following, I think, are passages which were very unlikely to have presented themselves to the mind of a forger or a fabulist.

Matt. xxi. 21. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done unto the fig-tree, but also, if ye shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done; all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, it shall be done."<sup>b</sup> It appears to me very improbable

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, Cred. vol. xv. p. 422.

<sup>b</sup> See also chap. xvii. 20. Luke xvii. 6.



that these words should have been put into Christ's mouth, if he had not actually spoken them. The term "faith," as here used, is perhaps rightly interpreted of confidence in that internal notice, by which the apostles were admonished of their power to perform any particular miracle. And this exposition renders the sense of the text more easy. But the words undoubtedly, in their obvious construction, carry with them a difficulty, which no writer would have brought upon himself officiously.

Luke ix. 59. "And he said unto another, follow me: but he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."<sup>a</sup> This answer, though very expressive of the transcendent importance of religious concerns, was apparently harsh and repulsive; and such as would not have been made for Christ, if he had not really used it. At least some other instance would have been chosen.

The following passage, I, for the same reason, think impossible to have been the production of artifice, or of a cold forgery:—"But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgement; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire (Gehennæ)." Matt. v. 22. It is emphatic, cogent, and well calculated for the purpose of impression; but is inconsistent with the supposition of art or wariness on the part of the relater.

The short reply of our Lord to Mary Magdalen, after his resurrection (John xx. 16, 17), "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father," in my opinion, must have been founded in a reference or allusion to some prior conversation, for the want of knowing which, his meaning is hidden from us. This very obscurity, however, is a proof of genuineness. No one would have forged such an answer.

John vi. The whole of the conversation, recorded in this chapter, is, in the highest degree, unlikely to be fabricated, especially the part of our Saviour's reply between the fiftieth and the fifty-eighth verse. I need only put down the first sentence: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give him is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Without calling in question the expositions that have

<sup>a</sup> See also Matt. viii. 21.

been given of this passage, we may be permitted to say, that it labours under an obscurity, in which it is impossible to believe that any one, who made speeches for the persons of his narrative, would have voluntarily involved them. That this discourse was obscure, even at the time, is confessed by the writer who had preserved it, when he tells us, at the conclusion, that many of our Lord's disciples, when they had heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?"

Christ's taking of a young child, and placing it in the midst of his contentious disciples (Matt. xviii. 2), though as decisive a proof, as any could be, of the benignity of his temper, and very expressive of the character of the religion which he wished to inculcate, was not by any means an obvious thought. Nor am I acquainted with any thing in any ancient writing which resembles it.

The account of the institution of the eucharist bears strong internal marks of genuineness. If it had been feigned, it would have been more full; it would have come nearer to the actual mode of celebrating the rite, as that mode obtained very early in the Christian churches: and it would have been more formal than it is. In the forged piece, called the Apostolic Constitutions, the apostles are made to enjoin many parts of the ritual which was in use in the second and third centuries, with as much particularity as a modern rubric could have done. Whereas, in the history of the Lord's supper, as we read it in Saint Matthew's Gospel, there is not so much as the command to repeat it. This, surely, looks like undesignedness. I think also that the difficulty arising from the conciseness of Christ's expression, "This is my body," would have been avoided in a made-up story. I allow that the explication of these words, given by protestants, is satisfactory; but it is deduced from a diligent comparison of the words in question with forms of expression used in Scripture, and especially by Christ upon other occasions. No writer would arbitrarily and unnecessarily have thus cast in his reader's way a difficulty, which, to say the least, it required research and erudition to clear up.

Now it ought to be observed, that the argument which is built upon these examples, extends both to the authenticity of the books and to the truth of the narrative: for it is improbable that the forger of a history in the name of another should have inserted such passages into it: and it is improbable also, that the persons whose names the books bear should have fabricated

such passages ; or even have allowed them a place in their work, if they had not believed them to express the truth.

The following observation, therefore, of Dr. Lardner, the most candid of all advocates, and the most cautious of all inquirers, seems to be well founded :—" Christians are induced to believe the writers of the Gospel, by observing the evidences of piety and probity that appear in their writings, in which there is no deceit, or artifice, or cunning, or design." " No remarks," as Dr. Beattie hath properly said, " are thrown in, to anticipate objections ; nothing of that caution, which never fails to distinguish the testimony of those who are conscious of imposture ; no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative."

I beg leave to cite also another author<sup>a</sup>, who has well expressed the reflection which the examples now brought forward were intended to suggest. " It doth not appear that ever it came into the mind of these writers, to consider how this or the other action would appear to mankind, or what objections might be raised upon them. But without at all attending to this, they lay the facts before you, at no pains to think whether they would appear credible or not. If the reader will not believe their testimony, there is no help for it : they tell the truth and attend to nothing else. Surely this looks like sincerity, and that they published nothing to the world but what they believed themselves."

As no improper supplement to this chapter, I crave a place here for observing the extreme *naturalness* of some of the things related in the New Testament.

Mark ix. 23. " Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief." This struggle in the father's heart, between solicitude for the preservation of his child, and a kind of involuntary distrust of Christ's power to heal him, is here expressed with an air of reality, which could hardly be counterfeited.

Again (Matt. xxi. 9), the eagerness of the people to introduce Christ into Jerusalem, and their demand, a short time afterwards, of his crucifixion, when he did not turn out what they expected him to be, so far from affording matter of objec-

<sup>a</sup> Duchal, p. 97, 98.



tion, represents popular favour in exact agreement with nature and with experience, as the flux and reflux of a wave.

The rulers and Pharisees rejecting Christ, whilst many of the common people received him, was the effect which, in the then state of Jewish prejudices, I should have expected. And the reason with which they who rejected Christ's mission kept themselves in countenance, and with which also they answered the arguments of those who favoured it, is precisely the reason which such men usually give :—"Have any of the scribes or Pharisees believed on him?" (John vii. 48.)

In our Lord's conversation at the well (John iv. 29), Christ had surprised the Samaritan woman with an allusion to a single particular in her domestic situation, "Thou hast had five husbands; and he, whom thou now hast, is not thy husband." The woman, soon after this, ran back to the city, and called out to her neighbours, "Come, see a man which told me *all things* that ever I did." This exaggeration appears to me very natural; especially in the hurried state of spirits into which the woman may be supposed to have been thrown.

The lawyer's subtilty in running a distinction upon the word neighbour, in the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," was no less natural, than our Saviour's answer was decisive and satisfactory. (Luke x. 29.) The lawyer of the New Testament, it must be observed, was a Jewish divine.

The behaviour of Gallio (Acts xviii. 12—17), and of Festus (xxv. 18, 19), have been observed upon already.

The consistency of Saint Paul's character throughout the whole of his history, (*viz.* the warmth and activity of his zeal, first against, and then for Christianity,) carries with it very much of the appearance of truth.

There are also some *properties*, as they may be called, observable in the Gospels; that is, circumstances separately suiting with the situation, character, and intention of their respective authors.

Saint Matthew, who was an inhabitant of Galilee, and did not join Christ's society until some time after Christ had come into Galilee to preach, has given us very little of his history prior to that period. Saint John, who had been converted before, and who wrote to supply omissions in the other Gospels, relates some remarkable particulars which had taken place before Christ left Judea, to go into Galilee<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Hartley's Observations, vol. ii. p. 103.

Saint Matthew (xv. 1) has recorded the cavil of the Pharisees against the disciples of Jesus, for eating "with unclean hands." Saint Mark has also (vii. 1) recorded the same transaction, (taken probably from Saint Matthew,) but with this addition; "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands often, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders: and when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not: and many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables." Now Saint Matthew was not only a Jew himself, but it is evident, from the whole structure of his Gospel, especially from his numerous references to the Old Testament, that he wrote for Jewish readers. The above explanation therefore, in him, would have been unnatural, as not being wanted by the readers whom he addressed. But in Mark, who, whatever use he might make of Matthew's Gospel, intended his own narrative for a general circulation, and who himself travelled to distant countries in the service of the religion, it was properly added.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### IDENTITY OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

THE argument expressed by this title, I apply principally to the comparison of the first three Gospels with that of Saint John. It is known to every reader of Scripture, that the passages of Christ's history, preserved by Saint John, are, except his passion and resurrection, for the most part, different from those which are delivered by the other evangelists. And I think the ancient account of this difference to be the true one, *viz.* that Saint John wrote *after* the rest, and to supply what he thought omissions in their narratives, of which the principal were our Saviour's conferences with the Jews of Jerusalem, and his discourses to his apostles at his last supper. But what I observe in the comparison of these several accounts is, that, although actions and discourses are ascribed to Christ by Saint John, in general different from what are given to him by the other evangelists, yet under this diversity, there is a similitude of *manner*, which indicates that the actions and discourses proceeded from the same person. I should have laid little stress

upon the repetition of actions substantially alike, or of discourses containing many of the same expressions, because that is a species of resemblance which would either belong to a true history, or might easily be imitated in a false one. Nor do I deny that a dramatic writer is able to sustain propriety and distinction of character, through a great variety of separate incidents and situations. But the evangelists were not dramatic writers; nor possessed the talents of dramatic writers; nor will it, I believe, be suspected, that they *studied* uniformity of character, or ever thought of any such thing, in the person who was the subject of their histories. Such uniformity, if it exist, is on their part casual; and if there be, as I contend there is, a perceptible resemblance of *manner*, in passages, and between discourses, which are in themselves extremely distinct, and are delivered by historians writing without any imitation of, or reference to, one another, it affords a just presumption, that these are, what they profess to be, the actions and the discourses of the same real person; that the evangelists wrote from fact and not from imagination.

The article in which I find this agreement most strong, is in our Saviour's mode of teaching, and in that particular property of it, which consists in his drawing of his doctrine from the occasion; or, which is nearly the same thing, raising reflections from the objects and incidents before him, or turning a particular discourse then passing, into an opportunity of general instruction.

It will be my business to point out this *manner* in the first three evangelists; and then to inquire, whether it do not appear also, in several examples of Christ's discourses preserved by Saint John.

The reader will observe in the following quotations that the Italic letter contains the reflection; the common letter, the incident or occasion from which it springs.

Matt. xii. 47—50. "Then they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered, and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren: *for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*"

Matt. xvi. 5. "And when his disciples were come to the



other side, they had forgotten to take bread ; then Jesus said unto them, *Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.* And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.—How is it that ye do not understand, that I speak it not to you concerning bread, that ye shall beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they, *how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the DOCTRINE of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*”

Matt. xv. 1, 2. 10, 11. 15—20. “Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.—And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear and understand : *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man.*—Then answered Peter, and said unto him, declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do ye not understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? but those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and they defile the man : *for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies ; these are the things which defile a man :* BUT TO EAT WITH UNWASHEN HANDS, DEFILETH NOT A MAN.” Our Saviour, on this occasion, expatiates rather more at large than usual, and his discourse also is more divided ; but the concluding sentence brings back the whole train of thought to the incident in the first verse, *viz.* the objurgatory question of the Pharisees, and renders it evident that the whole sprang from that circumstance.

Mark x. 13, 14, 15. “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them ; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them : but when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not ; *for of such is the kingdom of God : verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*”

Mark i. 16, 17. “Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers : and Jesus said unto them, *Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men.*”

Luke xi. 27. "And it came to pass as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked: but he said, *Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*"

Luke xiii. 1—3. "There were present at that season, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices; and Jesus answering, said unto them, *Suppose ye, that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*"

Luke xiv. 15. "And when one of them that sat at meat with him, heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, *A certain man made a great supper, and bade many,*" &c. The parable is rather too long for insertion, but affords a striking instance of Christ's *manner* of raising a discourse from the occasion. Observe also in the same chapter two other examples of advice, drawn from the circumstances of the entertainment and the behaviour of the guests.

We will now see how this *manner* discovers itself in *Saint John's* history of Christ.

John vi. 25. "And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them, and said, Verily I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.*"

John iv. 12. "Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered, and said unto her, (the woman of Samaria,) Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but *whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.*"

John iv. 31. "In the mean while, his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat; but he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat? Jesus saith

unto them, *My meat is, to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*"

John ix. 1—5. "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth: and his disciples asked him, saying, Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. *I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*"

John ix. 35—40. "Jesus heard that they had cast him (the blind man above-mentioned) out: and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? And he answered, and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe; and he worshipped him. And Jesus said, *For judgement I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see, might be made blind.*"

All that the reader has now to do, is to compare the series of examples taken from Saint John, with the series of examples taken from the other evangelists, and to judge whether there be not a visible agreement of *manner* between them. In the above-quoted passages, the occasion is stated, as well as the reflection. They seem, therefore, the most proper for the purpose of our argument. A large, however, and curious collection has been made by different writers<sup>a</sup>, of instances, in which it is extremely probable that Christ spoke in allusion to some object, or some occasion, then before him, though the mention of the occasion, or of the object, be omitted in the history. I only observe, that these instances are common to Saint John's Gospel with the other three.

I conclude this article by remarking, that nothing of this *manner* is perceptible in the speeches recorded in the Acts, or in any other but those which are attributed to Christ, and that, in truth, it was a very unlikely manner for a forger or fabulist to attempt; and a manner very difficult for any writer to execute, if he had to supply all the materials, both the incidents and the observations upon them, out of his own head. A forger or a

<sup>a</sup> Newton on Daniel, p. 148, note a. Jortin, Dis. p. 213. Bishop Law's Life of Christ.



fabulist would have made for Christ, discourses exhorting to virtue and dissuading from vice in general terms. It would never have entered into the thoughts of either, to have crowded together such a number of allusions to time, place, and other little circumstances, as occur, for instance, in the sermon on the mount, and which nothing but the actual presence of the objects could have suggested<sup>a</sup>.

II. There appears to me to exist an affinity between the history of Christ's placing a little child in the midst of his disciples, as related by the first three evangelists<sup>b</sup>, and the history of Christ's washing his disciples' feet, as given by Saint John<sup>c</sup>. In the stories themselves there is no resemblance. But the affinity which I would point out consists in these two articles : First, that both stories denote the emulation which prevailed amongst Christ's disciples, and his own care and desire to correct it ; the moral of both is the same. Secondly, that both stories are specimens of the same manner of teaching, *viz.* by action ; a mode of emblematic instruction extremely peculiar, and, in these passages, ascribed, we see, to our Saviour, by the first three evangelists, and by St. John, in instances totally unlike, and without the smallest suspicion of their borrowing from each other.

III. A singularity in Christ's language, which runs through all the evangelists, and which is found in those discourses of St. John, that have nothing similar to them in the other Gospels, is the appellation of "the Son of man;" and it is in all the evangelists found under the peculiar circumstance of being applied by Christ to himself, but of never being used of him, or towards him, by any other person. It occurs seventeen times in Matthew's Gospel, twenty times in Mark's, twenty-one times in Luke's, and eleven times in John's, and always with this restriction.

IV. A point of agreement in the conduct of Christ, as represented by his different historians, is that of his withdrawing himself out of the way, whenever the behaviour of the multitude indicated a disposition to tumult.

Matt. xiv. 22. "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitude away. And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray."

<sup>a</sup> See Bishop Law's *Life of Christ*.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xviii. 1. Mark ix. 33. Luke ix. 46.

<sup>c</sup> Chap. xiii. 3.

Luke v. 15, 16. "But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him, and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities : and he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed."

With these quotations, compare the following from St. John:

Chap. v. 13. "And he that was healed, wist not who it was, for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place."

Chap. vi. 15. "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."

In this last instance, Saint John gives the motive of Christ's conduct, which is left unexplained by the other evangelists, who have related the conduct itself.

V. Another, and a more singular circumstance in Christ's ministry, was the reserve, which, for some time, and upon some occasions at least, he used in declaring his own character, and his leaving it to be collected from his works, rather than his professions. Just reasons for this reserve have been assigned<sup>a</sup>. But it is not what one would have expected. We meet with it in Saint Matthew's Gospel (chap. xvi. 20): "Then charged he his disciples, that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." Again, and upon a different occasion, in Saint Mark's (chap. iii. 11): "And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried saying, Thou art the Son of God : and he straitly charged them that they should not make him known." Another instance similar to this last is recorded by Saint Luke (chap. iv. 41). What we thus find in the three evangelists, appears also in a passage of Saint John (chap. x. 24, 25): "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt: If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." The occasion here was different from any of the rest ; and it was indirect. We only discover Christ's conduct through the upbraidings of his adversaries. But all this strengthens the argument. I had rather at any time surprise a coincidence in some oblique allusion, than read it in broad assertions.

VI. In our Lord's commerce with his disciples, one very observable particular is the difficulty which they found in understanding him, when he spoke to them of the future part of his history, especially of what related to his passion or resurrection.

<sup>a</sup> See Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity.

This difficulty produced, as was natural, a wish in them to ask for further explanation; from which, however, they appear to have been sometimes kept back, by the fear of giving offence. All these circumstances are distinctly noticed by Mark and Luke, upon the occasion of his informing them (probably for the first time) that the Son of man should be delivered into the hands of men. "They understood not," the evangelists tell us, "this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not; and they feared to ask him of that saying." Luke ix. 45; Mark ix. 32. In Saint John's Gospel, we have, on a different occasion, and in a different instance, the same difficulty of apprehension, the same curiosity, and the same restraint:—"A little while and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us? A little while and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said, therefore, What is this that he saith? A little while? We cannot tell what he saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them,—&c. John xvi. 16, et seq.

VII. The meekness of Christ during his last sufferings, which is conspicuous in the narratives of the first three evangelists, is preserved in that of Saint John under separate examples. The answer given by him, in Saint John<sup>a</sup>, when the high priest asked him of his disciples and his doctrine; "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing; why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them;" is very much of a piece with his reply to the armed party which seized him, as we read it in Saint Mark's Gospel, and in Saint Luke's<sup>b</sup>: "Are you come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not." In both answers, we discern the same tranquillity, the same reference to his public teaching. His mild expostulation with Pilate, on two several occasions, as related by Saint John<sup>c</sup>, is delivered with the same unruffled temper, as that which conducted him through the last scene of his life, as described by his other evangelists. His answer, in Saint John's Gospel, to the officer

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xviii. 20, 21.

<sup>b</sup> Mark xiv. 48. Luke xxii. 52.

<sup>c</sup> Chap. xviii. 34.; xix. 11.



who struck him with the palm of his hand, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"<sup>a</sup> was such an answer as might have been looked for from the person, who, as he proceeded to the place of execution, bid his companions (as we are told by Saint Luke<sup>b</sup>) weep not for him but for themselves, their posterity, and their country; and who, whilst he was suspended upon the cross, prayed for his murderers, "for they know not," said he, "what they do." The urgency also of his judges and his prosecutors to extort from him a defence to the accusation, and his unwillingness to make any, (which was a peculiar circumstance,) appears in Saint John's account, as well as in that of the other evangelists<sup>c</sup>.

There are moreover two other correspondencies between Saint John's history of the transaction and theirs, of a kind somewhat different from those which we have been now mentioning.

The first three evangelists record what is called our Saviour's agony, *i. e.* his devotion in the garden immediately before he was apprehended; in which narrative, they all make him pray, "that the cup might pass from him." This is the particular metaphor which they all ascribe to him. Saint Matthew adds, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."<sup>d</sup> Now Saint John does not give the scene in the garden: but when Jesus was seized, and some resistance was attempted to be made by Peter, Jesus, according to his account, checked the attempt with this reply: "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"<sup>e</sup> This is something more than consistency; it is coincidence; because it is extremely natural, that Jesus, who, before he was apprehended, had been praying his Father, that "that cup might pass from him," yet with such a pious retraction of his request, as to have added, "If this cup may not pass from me, thy will be done;" it was natural, I say, for the same person, when he actually was apprehended, to express the resignation to which he had already made up his thoughts, and to express it in the form of speech which he had before used, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" This is a coincidence between writers, in whose narratives there is no imitation, but great diversity.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xviii. 23.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. xxiii. 28.

<sup>c</sup> See John xix. 9. Matt. xxvii. 14. Luke xxiii. 9.

<sup>d</sup> Chap. xxvi. 42.

<sup>e</sup> Chap. xviii. 11.

A second similar correspondence is the following: Matthew and Mark make the charge, upon which our Lord was condemned, to be a threat of destroying the temple; "We heard him say, I will destroy this temple, made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands:"<sup>a</sup> but they neither of them inform us, upon what circumstance this calumny was founded. Saint John, in the early part of the history<sup>b</sup>, supplies us with this information; for he relates, that on our Lord's first journey to Jerusalem, when the Jews asked him, "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" he answered, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This agreement could hardly arise from any thing but the truth of the case. From any care or design in Saint John, to make his narrative tally with the narratives of other evangelists, it certainly did not arise, for no such design appears, but the absence of it.

A strong and more general instance of agreement, is the following.—The first three evangelists have related the appointment of the twelve apostles<sup>c</sup>; and have given a catalogue of their names in form. John, without ever mentioning the appointment, or giving the catalogue, supposes, throughout his whole narrative, Christ to be accompanied by a select party of disciples; the number of these to be twelve<sup>d</sup>; and whenever he happens to notice any one as of that number<sup>e</sup>, it is one included in the catalogue of the other evangelists: and the names principally occurring in the course of *his* history of Christ are the names extant in their list. This last agreement, which is of considerable moment, runs through every Gospel, and through every chapter of each.

All this bespeaks reality.

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## CHAPTER V.

### ORIGINALITY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S CHARACTER.

THE Jews, whether right or wrong, had understood their prophecies to foretell the advent of a person, who by some supernatural assistance should advance their nation to independence, and to a supreme degree of splendour and prosperity. This was the reigning opinion and expectation of the times.

Now, had Jesus been an enthusiast, it is probable that his en-

<sup>a</sup> Mark xiv. 58.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. ii. 19.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. x. 1. Mark iii. 14. Luke vi. 12.

<sup>d</sup> Chap. vi. 70.

<sup>e</sup> Chap. xx. 24. vi. 71.

thusiasm would have fallen in with the popular delusion, and that, while he gave himself out to be the person intended by these predictions, he would have assumed the character to which they were universally supposed to relate.

Had he been an impostor, it was his business to have flattered the prevailing hopes, because these hopes were to be the instruments of his attraction and success.

But, what is better than conjectures, is the fact, that all the pretended Messiahs actually did so. We learn from Josephus, that there were many of these. Some of them, it is probable, might be impostors, who thought that an advantage was to be taken of the state of public opinion. Others, perhaps, were enthusiasts, whose imagination had been drawn to this particular object, by the language and sentiments which prevailed around them. But whether impostors or enthusiasts, they concurred in producing themselves in the character which their countrymen looked for, that is to say, as the restorers and deliverers of the nation, in that sense in which restoration and deliverance were expected by the Jews.

Why therefore Jesus, if he was, like them, either an enthusiast or impostor, did not pursue the same conduct as they did, in framing his character and pretensions, it will be found difficult to explain. A mission, the operation and benefit of which was to take place in another life, was a thing unthought of as the subject of these prophecies. That Jesus, coming to them as their Messiah, should come under a character totally different from that in which they expected him; should deviate from the general persuasion, and deviate into pretensions absolutely singular and original; appears to be inconsistent with the imputation of enthusiasm or imposture, both which, by their nature, I should expect, would, and both which, throughout the experience which this very subject furnishes, in fact *have*, followed the opinions that obtained at the time.

If it be said, that Jesus, having tried the other plan, turned at length to this; I answer, that the thing is said without evidence; against evidence; that it was competent to the rest to have done the same, yet that nothing of this sort was thought of by any.

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## CHAPTER VI.

ONE argument, which has been much relied upon, (but not more than its just weight deserves,) is the conformity of the facts oc-



casionally mentioned or referred to in Scripture, with the state of things in those times, as represented by foreign and independent accounts; which conformity proves, that the writers of the New Testament possessed a species of local knowledge, which could belong only to an inhabitant of that country, and to one living in that age. This argument, if well made out by examples, is very little short of proving the absolute genuineness of the writings. It carries them up to the age of the reputed authors, to an age in which it must have been difficult to impose upon the Christian public forgeries in the names of those authors, and in which there is no evidence that any forgeries were attempted. It proves, at least, that the books, whoever were the authors of them, were composed by persons living in the time and country in which these things were transacted; and consequently capable, by their situation, of being well informed of the facts which they relate. And the argument is stronger when applied to the New Testament, than it is in the case of almost any other writings, by reason of the mixed nature of the allusions which this book contains. The scene of action is not confined to a single country, but displayed in the greatest cities of the Roman empire. Allusions are made to the manners and principles of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews. This variety renders a forgery proportionably more difficult, especially to writers of a posterior age. A Greek or Roman Christian, who lived in the second or third century, would have been wanting in Jewish literature; a Jewish convert in those ages would have been equally deficient in the knowledge of Greece and Rome<sup>a</sup>.

This, however, is an argument which depends entirely upon an induction of particulars; and as, consequently, it carries with it little force, without a view of the instances upon which it is built, I have to request the reader's attention to a detail of examples, distinctly and articulately proposed. In collecting these examples, I have done no more than epitomise the first volume of the first part of Dr. Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*. And I have brought the argument within its present compass, first, by passing over some of his sections in which the accordancy appeared to me less certain, or upon subjects not sufficiently appropriate or circumstantial; secondly, by contracting every section into the fewest words possible, contenting myself for the most part with a mere *apposition* of passages; and,

<sup>a</sup> Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament, (Marsh's translation,) c. ii. sect. xi.

thirdly, by omitting many disquisitions, which, though learned and accurate, are not absolutely necessary to the understanding or verification of the argument.

The writer principally made use of in the inquiry, is Josephus. Josephus was born at Jerusalem four years after Christ's ascension. He wrote his history of the Jewish war some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in the year of our Lord LXX, that is, thirty-seven years after the ascension; and his history of the Jews he finished in the year XCIII, that is, sixty years after the ascension.

At the head of each article, I have referred, by figures included in brackets, to the page of Dr. Lardner's volume, where the section, from which the abridgment is made, begins. The edition used, is that of 1741.

I. [p. 14.] Matt. ii. 22. "When he (Joseph) heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee."

In this passage it is asserted, that Archelaus succeeded Herod in Judea; and it is implied, that his power did *not* extend to Galilee. Now we learn from Josephus, that Herod the Great, whose dominion included all the land of Israel, appointed Archelaus his successor in *Judea*, and assigned the *rest* of his dominions to other sons; and that this disposition was ratified, as to the main parts of it, by the Roman emperor<sup>a</sup>.

Saint Matthew says, that Archelaus *reigned*, was *king*, in Judea. Agreeably to this, we are informed by Josephus, not only that Herod appointed Archelaus his successor in Judea, but that he also appointed him with the title of King; and the Greek verb βασιλευει, which the evangelist uses to denote the government and rank of Archelaus, is used likewise by Josephus<sup>b</sup>.

The cruelty of Archelaus's character, which is not obscurely intimated by the evangelist, agrees with divers particulars in his history, preserved by Josephus:—"In the tenth year of his government, the chief of the Jews and Samaritans, not being able to endure his cruelty and tyranny, presented complaints against him to Cæsar."<sup>c</sup>

II. [p. 19.] Luke iii. 1. "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar,—Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his

<sup>a</sup> Ant. lib. xvii. c. 8. sect. 1.

<sup>b</sup> De Bell. lib. i. c. 33. sect. 7.

<sup>c</sup> Ant. lib. xvii. c. 13. sect. 1.

brother Philip, tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis,—the word of God came unto John.”

By the will of Herod the Great and the decree of Augustus thereupon, his two sons were appointed, one (Herod Antipas) tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, and the other (Philip) tetrarch of Trachonitis and the neighbouring countries<sup>a</sup>. We have therefore these two persons in the situations in which Saint Luke places them; and also, that they were in these situations in the *fifteenth* year of Tiberius, in other words, that they continued in possession of their territories and titles until that time, and afterwards, appears from a passage of Josephus, which relates of Herod, “that he was *removed* by Caligula, the successor of Tiberius<sup>b</sup>; and of Philip, that he died in the *twentieth* year of Tiberius, when he had governed Trachonitis and Batanea and Gaulanitis thirty-seven years.”<sup>c</sup>

III. [p. 20.] Mark vi. 17<sup>d</sup>. “Herod had sent forth, and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison, for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife: for he had married her.”

With this compare Joseph. Antiq. l. xviii. c. 6. sect. 1:—“He (Herod the tetrarch) made a visit to Herod his brother.—Here, falling in love with Herodias, the wife of the said Herod, he ventured to make her proposals of marriage.”<sup>e</sup>

Again, Mark vi. 22. “And when the *daughter of the said Herodias* came in and danced——.”

With this also compare Joseph. Antiq. l. xviii. c. 6. sect. 4. “Herodias was married to Herod, son of Herod the Great. *They had a daughter*, whose name was Salome; after whose birth, Herodias, in utter violation of the laws of her country, left her husband, then living, and married Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, her husband’s brother by the father’s side.”

IV. [p. 29.] Acts xii. 1. “Now, about that time, *Herod the king* stretched forth his hands, to vex certain of the church.”

<sup>a</sup> Ant. lib. xvii. c. 8. sect. 1.    <sup>b</sup> Ib. lib. xviii. c. 8. sect. 2.    <sup>c</sup> Ib. c. 5. sect. 6.

<sup>d</sup> See also Matt. xiv. 1—13; Luke iii. 19.

<sup>e</sup> The affinity of the two accounts is unquestionable; but there is a difference in the name of Herodias’s first husband, which, in the evangelist, is Philip; in Josephus, Herod. The difficulty, however, will not appear considerable, when we recollect how common it was in those times for the same person to bear two names. “Simon, which is called Peter; Lebbeus, whose surname is Thaddeus; Thomas, which is called Didymus; Simeon, who was called Niger; Saul, who was also called Paul.” The solution is rendered likewise easier in the present case, by the consideration, that Herod the Great had children by seven or eight wives; that Josephus mentions three of his sons under the name of Herod; that it is nevertheless highly probable, that the brothers bore some additional name, by which they were distinguished from one another. Lardner, vol. ii. p. 897.



In the conclusion of the same chapter, Herod's *death* is represented to have taken place soon after this persecution. The accuracy of our historian, or, rather, the unmeditated coincidence, which truth of its own accord produces, is in this instance remarkable. There was no portion of time, for thirty years before, nor *ever* afterwards, in which there was a *king* at Jerusalem, a person exercising that authority in Judea, or to whom that title could be applied, except the last three years of this Herod's life, within which period the transaction recorded in the Acts is stated to have taken place. This prince was the grandson of Herod the Great. In the Acts he appears under his family-name of Herod; by Josephus he was called Agrippa. For proof that he was a *king*, properly so called, we have the testimony of Josephus in full and direct terms:—"Sending for him to his palace, Caligula put a crown upon his head, and appointed him king of the tetrarchie of Philip, intending also to give him the tetrarchie of Lysanias." And that Judea was at last, but not until the last, included in his dominions, appears by a subsequent passage of the same Josephus, wherein he tells us, that Claudius, by a decree, confirmed to Agrippa the dominion which Caligula had given him; *adding also Judea and Samaria, in the utmost extent, as possessed by his grandfather Herod*<sup>b</sup>.

V. [p. 32.] Acts xii. 19—23. "And he (Herod) went down from Judea to Cesarea, and there abode. And on a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them: and the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god and not of a man: and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xix. c. 8. sect. 2. "He went to the city or Cesarea. Here he celebrated shows in honour of Cæsar. On the second day of the shows, early in the morning, he came into the theatre, dressed in a robe of silver, of most curious workmanship. The rays of the rising sun, reflected from such a splendid garb, gave him a majestic and awful appearance. They called him a god; and entreated him to be propitious to them, saying, Hitherto we have respected you as a man; but now we acknowledge you to be more than mortal. The king neither reprov'd these persons, nor rejected the impious flattery. Immediately after this, he was seized with pains in his

<sup>a</sup> Antiq. xviii. c. 7. sect. 10.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. xix. c. 5. sect. 1.

bowels, extremely violent at the very first. He was carried therefore with all haste to his palace. These pains continually tormenting him, he expired in five days' time."

The reader will perceive the accordancy of these accounts in various particulars. The place, (Cesarea,) the set day, the gorgeous dress, the acclamations of the assembly, the peculiar turn of the flattery, the reception of it, the sudden and critical incursion of the disease, are circumstances noticed in both narratives. The worms mentioned by Saint Luke, are not remarked by Josephus; but the appearance of these is a symptom, not unusually, I believe, attending the disease which Josephus describes, *viz.* violent affections of the bowels.

VI. [p. 41.] Acts xxiv. 24. "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xx. c. 6. sect. 1, 2. "Agrippa gave his sister Drusilla in marriage to Azizus, king of the Emesenes, when he had consented to be circumcised.—But this marriage of Drusilla with Azizus was dissolved in a short time after in this manner:—When *Felix was procurator of Judea*, having had a sight of her, he was mightily taken with her.—She was induced to transgress the laws of her country, and marry Felix."

Here the public station of Felix, the name of his wife, and the singular circumstance of her religion, all appear in perfect conformity with the evangelist.

VII. [p. 46.] Acts xxv. 13. "And after certain days, king Agrippa and Berenice came to Cesarea to salute Festus." By this passage we are in effect told that Agrippa was a king, but not of Judea; for he came to salute Festus, who at this time administered the government of that country at Cesarea.

Now, how does the history of the age correspond with this account? The Agrippa here spoken of, was the son of Herod Agrippa, mentioned in the last article; but that he did not succeed to his father's kingdom, nor ever recovered Judea, which had been a part of it, we learn by the information of Josephus, who relates of him that, when his father was dead, Claudius intended, at first, to have put him immediately in possession of his father's dominions; but that, Agrippa being then but seventeen years of age, the emperor was persuaded to alter his mind, and appointed Cuspius Fadus prefect of Judea and the whole kingdom<sup>a</sup>; which Fadus was succeeded by Tiberius Alexander,

<sup>a</sup> Antiq. xix. c. 9 ad fin.

Cumanus, Felix, Festus<sup>a</sup>. But that, though disappointed of his father's kingdom, in which was included Judea, he was nevertheless rightly styled *King Agrippa*, and that he was in possession of considerable territories bordering upon Judea, we gather from the same authority: for, after several successive donations of country, "Claudius, at the same time that he sent Felix to be procurator of Judea, promoted Agrippa from Chalcis to a greater *kingdom*, giving to him the tetrarchie which had been Philip's; and he added moreover the *kingdom* of Lysanias, and the province that had belonged to Varus."<sup>b</sup>

Saint Paul addresses this person as a Jew: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." As the son of Herod Agrippa, who is described by Josephus to have been a zealous Jew, it is reasonable to suppose that he maintained the same profession. But what is more material to remark, because it is more close and circumstantial, is, that Saint Luke, speaking of the father, (Acts xii. 1—3,) calls him Herod the king, and gives an example of the exercise of his authority at Jerusalem: speaking of the son, (xxv. 13,) he calls him king, but not of Judea; which distinction agrees correctly with the history.

VIII. [p. 51.] Acts xiii. 6. "And when they had gone through the isle (Cyprus) to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus, which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man."

The word, which is here translated deputy, signifies *proconsul*, and upon this word our observation is founded. The provinces of the Roman empire were of two kinds; those belonging to the emperor, in which the governor was called pro-prætor; and those belonging to the senate, in which the governor was called proconsul. And this was a regular distinction. Now it appears from Dio Cassius<sup>c</sup>, that the province of Cyprus, which in the original distribution was assigned to the emperor, had been transferred to the senate, in exchange for some others; and that, after this exchange, the appropriate title of the Roman governor was proconsul.

Ib. xviii. 12. [p. 55.] "And when Gallio was deputy (*proconsul*) of Achaia."

The propriety of the title "proconsul" is in this passage

<sup>a</sup> Antiq. xx. de Bell. lib. ii.

<sup>b</sup> De Bell. lib. ii. c. 12. ad fin.

<sup>c</sup> Lib. liv. ad A. U. 732.



still more critical. For the province of Achaia, after passing from the senate to the emperor, had been restored again by the emperor Claudius to the senate (and consequently its government had become *proconsular*) only six or seven years before the time in which this transaction is said to have taken place<sup>a</sup>. And what confines with strictness the appellation to the time is, that Achaia under the following reign ceased to be a Roman province at all.

IX. [p. 152.] It appears, as well from the general constitution of a Roman province, as from what Josephus delivers concerning the state of Judea in particular<sup>b</sup>, that the power of life and death resided exclusively in the Roman governor; but that the Jews, nevertheless, had magistrates and a council, invested with a subordinate and municipal authority. This œconomy is discerned in every part of the Gospel narrative of our Saviour's crucifixion.

X. [p. 203.] Acts ix. 31. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria."

This *rest* synchronizes with the attempt of Caligula to place his statue in the temple of Jerusalem; the threat of which outrage produced amongst the Jews a consternation that, for a season, diverted their attention from every other object<sup>c</sup>.

XI. [p. 218.] Acts xxi. 30. "And they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple; and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came to the chief captain of the *band*, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Then the chief captain came near, and took him and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and demanded who he was, and what he had done; and some cried one thing, and some another, among the multitude: and, when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the *castle*. And when he came upon the *stairs*, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people."

In this quotation, we have the band of Roman soldiers at Jerusalem, their office, (to suppress tumults,) the castle, the stairs, both, as it should seem, adjoining to the temple. Let us inquire whether we can find these particulars in any other record of that age and place.

Joseph. de Bell. lib. v. c. 5. sect. 8. "Antonia was situated at the angle of the western and northern porticoes of the outer

<sup>a</sup> Suet. in Claud. c. xxv. Dio, lib. lxi. <sup>b</sup> Antiq. lib. xx. c. 8. sect. 5. c. 1. sect. 2.

<sup>c</sup> Joseph. de Bell. lib. xi. c. 13. sect. 1, 3, 4.

temple. It was built upon a rock fifty cubits high, steep on all sides.—On that side where it joined to the porticoes of the temple, there were *stairs* reaching to each portico, by which the *guard* descended; for there was always lodged here a *Roman legion*, and posting themselves in their armour in several places in the porticoes, they kept a watch on the people on the feast-days *to prevent all disorders*; for, as the temple was a guard to the city, so was Antonia to the temple.”

XII. [p. 224.] Acts iv. 1. “And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the *captain of the temple*, and the Sadducees, came upon them.” Here we have a public officer, under the title of captain of the temple, and he probably a Jew, as he accompanied the priests and Sadducees in apprehending the apostles.

Joseph. de Bell. lib. ii. c. 17. sect. 2. “And at the *temple*, Eleazar, the son of Ananias, the high priest, a young man of a bold and resolute disposition, then *captain*, persuaded those who performed the sacred ministrations, not to receive the gift or sacrifice of any stranger.”

XIII. [p. 225.] Acts xxv. 12. “Then Festus, when he had conferred with the *council*, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go.” That it was usual for the Roman presidents to have a council consisting of their friends, and other chief Romans in the province, appears expressly in the following passage of Cicero’s oration against Verres:—“*Il-lud negare posses, aut nunc negabis, te, concilio tuo dimisso, viris primariis, qui in consilio C. Sacerdotis fuerant, tibi que esse volebant, remotis, de re judicatâ judicâsse?*”

XIV. [p. 235.] Acts xvi. 13. “And (at Philippi) on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river-side, where prayer was wont to be made,” or where a *προσευχη*, oratory, or place of prayer was allowed. The particularity to be remarked, is the situation of the place where prayer was wont to be made, *viz. by a river-side*.

Philo, describing the conduct of the Jews of Alexandria, on a certain public occasion, relates of them, that, “early in the morning, flocking out of the gates of the city, they go to the *neighbouring shores*, (for the *προσευχαι* were destroyed,) and, standing in a most pure place, they lift up their voices with one accord.”<sup>a</sup>

Josephus gives us a decree of the city of Halicarnassus, per-

<sup>a</sup> Philo in Flacc. p. 382.

mitting the Jews to build oratories; a part of which decree runs thus:—"We ordain, that the Jews, who are willing, men and women, do observe the Sabbaths, and perform sacred rites, according to the Jewish laws, and *build oratories by the sea-side.*"<sup>a</sup>

Tertullian among other Jewish rites and customs, such as feasts, sabbaths, fasts, and unleavened bread, mentions "*orations litorales,*" that is, prayers by the river-side<sup>b</sup>.

XV. [p. 255.] Acts xxvi. 5. "After the most *straitest* sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee."

Joseph. de Bell. lib. i. c. 5. sect. 2. "The Pharisees were reckoned the most religious of any of the Jews, and to be the most *exact* and skilful in explaining the laws."

In the original, there is an agreement not only in the sense but in the expression, it being the same Greek adjective, which is rendered "*strait,*" in the Acts, and "*exact*" in Josephus.

XVI. [p. 255.] Mark vii. 3, 4. "The Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and many other things there be which they have received to hold."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiii. c. 10. sect. 6. "The Pharisees have delivered up to the people many institutions, as received from the fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses."

XVII. [p. 259.] Acts xxiii. 8. "For the Sadducees say, that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both."

Joseph. de Bell. lib. ii. c. 8. sect. 14. "They (the Pharisees) believe every soul to be immortal, but that the soul of the good only passes into another body, and that the soul of the wicked is punished with eternal punishment." On the other hand, (Antiq. lib. xviii. c. i. sect. 4,) "It is the opinion of the Sadducees, that souls perish with the bodies."

XVIII. [p. 268.] Acts v. 17. "Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation." Saint Luke here intimates, that the high priest was a Sadducee; which is a character one would not have expected to meet with in that station. This circumstance, remarkable as it is, was not however without examples.

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiii. c. 10. sect. 6, 7. "John Hyrcanus, high priest of the Jews, forsook the Pharisees upon a disgust,

<sup>a</sup> Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiv. c. 10. sect. 24.

<sup>b</sup> Tertull. ad Nat. lib. i. c. 13.



and joined himself to the party of the Sadducees." This high priest died one hundred and seven years before the Christian era.

Again, (Antiq. lib. xx. c. 8. sect. 1.) "This Ananus the younger, who, as we have said just now, had received the high priesthood, was fierce and haughty in his behaviour, and, above all men, bold and daring, and, moreover, *was of the sect of the Sadducees.*" This high priest lived little more than twenty years after the transaction in the Acts.

XIX. [p. 282.] Luke ix. 51. "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face. And they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xx. c. 5. sect. 1. "It was the custom of the Galileans, who went up to the holy city at the feasts, to travel through the country of Samaria. As they were in their journey, some inhabitants of the village called Ginæa, which lies on the borders of Samaria and the great plain, falling upon them, killed a great many of them."

XX. [p. 278.] John iv. 20. "Our fathers," said the Samaritan woman, "worshipped in *this mountain*; and ye say, that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. c. v. sect. 1. "Commanding them to meet him at *mount Gerizzim*, which is by them (the Samaritans) esteemed the most sacred of all mountains."

XXI. [p. 312.] Matt. xxvi. 3. "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, *who was called Caiaphas.*" That Caiaphas was high priest, and high priest throughout the presidentship of Pontius Pilate, and consequently at this time, appears from the following account:—He was made high priest by Valerius Gratus, *predecessor* of Pontius Pilate, and was removed from his office by Vitellius, president of Syria, *after* Pilate was sent away out of the province of Judea. Josephus relates the *advancement* of Caiaphas to the high priesthood in this manner: "Gratus gave the high priesthood to Simon, the son of Camithus. He, having enjoyed this honour not above a year, was succeeded by Joseph, *who is also called Caiaphas.*"<sup>a</sup> After this, Gratus went away for Rome, having been eleven years in Judea;

<sup>a</sup> Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 2. sect. 2.

and *Pontius Pilate came thither as his successor*. Of the removal of Caiaphas from his office, Josephus likewise afterwards informs us; and connects it with a circumstance, which fixes the time to a date subsequent to the determination of Pilate's government—"Vitellius," he tells us, "ordered *Pilate to repair to Rome*; and *after that*, went up himself to Jerusalem, and then gave directions concerning several matters. And having done these things, he took away the priesthood from *the high priest Joseph*, who is called *Caiaphas*."<sup>a</sup>

XXII. (Michaelis, c. xi. sect. 11.) Acts xxiii. 4. "And they that stood by, said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest." Now, upon inquiry into the history of the age, it turns out, that Ananias, of whom this is spoken, was, in truth, *not* the high priest, though he was sitting in judgement in that assumed capacity. The case was, that he had formerly holden the office, and had been deposed; that the person who succeeded him had been murdered; that another was not yet appointed to the station; and that, during the vacancy, he had of his own authority, taken upon himself the discharge of the office<sup>b</sup>. This singular situation of the high priesthood took place during the interval between the death of Jonathan, who was murdered by order of Felix, and the accession of Ismaël, who was invested with the high priesthood by Agrippa; and precisely in this interval it happened that Saint Paul was apprehended, and brought before the Jewish council.

XXIII. [p. 323.] Matt. xxvi. 59. "Now the *chief priests* and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against him."

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 15. sect. 3, 4. "Then might be seen the *high priests themselves*, with ashes on their heads, and their breasts naked."

The agreement here consists in speaking of the high priests or chief priests (for the name in the original is the same) in the plural number, when in strictness, there was only *one* high priest: which may be considered as a proof, that the evangelists were habituated to the manner of speaking then in use, because they retain it when it is neither accurate nor just. For the sake of brevity, I have put down, from Josephus, only a

<sup>a</sup> Antiq. lib. xvii. c. 5. sect. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Joseph. Antiq. l. xx. c. 5. sect. 2; c. 6. sect. 2; c. 9. sect. 2.

single example of the application of this title in the plural number; but it is his usual style.

Ib. [p. 871.] Luke iii. 1. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, *Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests*, the word of God came unto John." There is a passage in Josephus very nearly parallel to this, and which may at least serve to vindicate the evangelist from objection, with respect to his giving the title of high priest specifically to two persons at the same time: "Quadratus sent two others of the most powerful men of the Jews, as also the *high priests Jonathan and Ananias*."<sup>a</sup> That Annas was a person in an eminent station, and possessed an authority co-ordinate with, or next to, that of the high priest properly so called, may be inferred from Saint John's Gospel, which, in the history of Christ's crucifixion, relates that "the soldiers led him away to Annas first."<sup>b</sup> And this might be noticed as an example of undesigned coincidence in the two evangelists.

Again, [p. 870.] Acts iv. 6. Annas is called the high priest, though Caiaphas was in the office of the high priesthood. In like manner, in Josephus<sup>c</sup>, "Joseph, the son of Gorion, and the high priest Ananus, were chosen to be supreme governors of all things in the city." Yet Ananus, though here called the high priest Ananus, was not then in the office of the high priesthood. The truth is, there is an indeterminateness in the use of this title in the Gospel: sometimes it is applied exclusively to the person who held the office at the time; sometimes to one or two more, who probably shared with him some of the powers or functions of the office; and, sometimes, to such of the priests as were eminent by their station or character<sup>d</sup>; and there is the very same indeterminateness in Josephus.

XXIV. [p. 347.] John xix. 19, 20. "And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross." That such was the custom of the Romans on these occasions, appears from passages of Suetonius and Dio Cassius: "Patrem familias—canibus objecit, cum hoc titulo, Impiè locutus parmularius." Suet. Domit. cap. x. And in Dio Cassius we have the following: "Having led him through the midst of the court or assembly, *with a writing signifying the cause of his death*, and afterwards crucifying him." Book liv.

<sup>a</sup> De Bell. lib. ix. c. 12. sect. 6.

<sup>b</sup> xviii. 13.

<sup>c</sup> Lib. ii. c. 20. sect. 3.

<sup>d</sup> Mark xiv. 53.



Ib. "And it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin." That it was also usual about this time in Jerusalem, to set up advertisements in *different* languages, is gathered from the account which Josephus gives of an expostulatory message from Titus to the Jews, when the city was almost in his hands; in which he says, Did ye not erect pillars with inscriptions on them, *in the Greek and in our language*, "Let no one pass beyond these bounds?"

XXV. [p. 352.] Matt. xxvii. 26. "When he had *scourged* Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified."

The following passages occur in Josephus:

"Being *beaten*, they were crucified opposite to the citadel."<sup>a</sup>

"Whom, having *first scourged with whips*, he crucified."<sup>b</sup>

"He was burnt alive, *having been first beaten*."<sup>c</sup>

To which may be added one from Livy, lib. xi. c. 5. "Pro-  
ductique omnes, *virgisque cæsi*, ac securi percussi."

A modern example may illustrate the use we make of this instance. The preceding of a capital execution by the corporal punishment of the sufferer, is a practice unknown in England, but retained, in some instances at least, as appears by the late execution of a regicide, in Sweden. This circumstance, therefore, in the account of an English execution, purporting to come from an English writer, would not only bring a suspicion upon the truth of the account, but would, in a considerable degree, impeach its pretensions of having been written by the author whose name it bore. Whereas, the same circumstance, in the account of a Swedish execution, would verify the account, and support the authenticity of the book in which it was found; or, at least, would prove that the author, whoever he was, possessed the information and the knowledge which he ought to possess.

XXVI. [p. 353.] John xix. 16. "And they took Jesus, and led him away; and he, *bearing his cross*, went forth."

Plutarch De iis qui serò puniuntur, p. 554; à Paris, 1624. "Every kind of wickedness produces its own particular torment; just as every malefactor, when he is brought forth to execution, *carries his own cross*."

XXVII. John xix. 32. "Then came the soldiers, and *brake the legs* of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him."

Constantine abolished the punishment of the cross: in commending which edict, a heathen writer notices this very circum-

<sup>a</sup> P. 1247, edit. 24. Huds.

<sup>b</sup> P. 1080, edit. 45.

<sup>c</sup> P. 1327, edit. 43.

stance of *breaking the legs*: “Eò pius, ut etiam vetus veterimumque supplicium, patibulum, et *cruribus suffringendis*, primus removerit.” Aur. Vict. Ces. cap. xli.

XXVIII. [p. 457.] Acts iii. 1. “Now Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, being the *ninth* hour.”

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xv. c. 7. sect. 8. “Twice every day, in the morning and at the *ninth* hour, the priests perform their duty at the altar.”

XXIX. [p. 462.] Acts xv. 21. “For Moses, of old time, hath, in every city, them that preach him, *being read in the synagogues every Sabbath-day*.”

Joseph. contra Ap. l. ii. “He (Moses) gave us the law, the most excellent of all institutions; nor did he appoint that it should be heard, once only, or twice, or often, but that, laying aside all other works, we should meet together *every week* to hear it read, and gain a perfect understanding of it.”

XXX. [p. 465.] Acts xxi. 23. “We have four men, which have a *vow* on them; them take, and purify thyself with them, that they may *shave their heads*.”

Joseph. de Bell. l. xi. c. 15. “It is customary for those who have been afflicted with some distemper, or have laboured under any other difficulties, to make a *vow* thirty days before they offer sacrifices, to abstain from wine, and *shave the hair of their heads*.”

Ib. v. 24. “Them take, and purify thyself with them, and *be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads*.”

Joseph. Antiq. l. xix. c. 6. “He (Herod Agrippa) coming to Jerusalem, offered up sacrifices of thanksgiving, and omitted nothing that was prescribed by the law. For which reason *he also ordered a good number of Nazarites to be shaved*.” We here find that it was an act of piety amongst the Jews, to defray for those who were under the Nazaritic vow the expenses which attended its completion; and that the phrase was, “that they might be shaved.” The custom and the expression are both remarkable, and both in close conformity with the Scripture account.

XXXI. [p. 474.] 2 Cor. xi. 24. “Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes, *save one*.”

Joseph. Antiq. iv. c. 8. sect. 21. “He that acts contrary hereto, let him receive forty stripes, *wanting one*, from the public officer.”

The coincidence here is singular, because the law *allowed* forty stripes :—"Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed." Deut. xxv. 3. It proves that the author of the Epistle to the Corinthians was guided not by books, but by facts; because his statement agrees with the actual custom, even when that custom deviated from the written law, and from what he must have learnt by consulting the Jewish code, as set forth in the Old Testament.

XXXII. [p. 490.] Luke iii. 12. "Then came also *publicans* to be baptized." From this quotation, as well as from the history of Levi or Matthew, (Luke v. 29,) and of Zaccheus, (Luke xix. 2,) it appears, that the publicans or tax-gatherers were, frequently at least, if not always, Jews: which, as the country was then under a Roman government, and the taxes were paid to the Romans, was a circumstance not to be expected. That it was the truth, however, of the case appears from a short passage of Josephus.

De Bell. lib. ii. c. 14. sect. 45.—"But, Florus not restraining these practices by his authority, the chief men of the Jews, *among whom was John the publican*, not knowing well what course to take, wait upon Florus, and give him eight talents of silver to stop the building."

XXXIII. [p. 496.] Acts xxii. 25. "And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you *to scourge a man that is a Roman*, and uncondemned?"

"Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum; scelus verberari." Cic. in Verr.

"Cædebatur virgis, in medio foro Messanæ, civis Romanus, Judices: cùm intereà nullus gemitus, nulla vox alia, istius miseri inter dolorem crepitumque plagarum audiebatur, nisi hæc, *Civis Romanus sum*."

XXXIV. [p. 513.] Acts xxii. 27. "Then the chief captain came, and said unto him (Paul), Tell me, Art thou a Roman? He said, Yea." The circumstance to be here noticed is, that a *Jew* was a Roman citizen.

Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiv. c. 10. sect. 13. "Lucius Lentulus, the consul, declared, I have dismissed from the service *the Jewish Roman citizens*, who observe the rites of the Jewish religion at Ephesus."

Ib. ver. 28. "And the chief captain answered, *With a great sum obtained I this freedom*."



Dio Cassius, lib. lx. "This privilege, which had been *bought formerly at a great price*, became so cheap, that it was commonly said, a man might be made a Roman citizen for a few pieces of broken glass."

XXXV. [p. 521.] Acts xxviii. 16. "And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself, with a *soldier that kept him*."

With which join ver. 20. "For the hope of Israel, I am bound with *this chain*."

"Quemadmodum eadem *catena* et custodiam et *militem* copulat; sic ista, quæ tam dissimilia sunt, pariter incedunt." Seneca, Ep. v.

"Proconsul æstimare solet, utrùm in carcerem recipienda sit persona, an *militi tradenda*." Ulpian. l. i. sect. De Custod. et Exhib. Reor.

In the confinement of Agrippa by the order of Tiberius, Antonia managed, that the centurion who presided over the guards, and the *soldier to whom Agrippa was to be bound*, might be men of mild character. (Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 7. sect. 5.) After the accession of Caligula, Agrippa also, like Paul, was suffered to dwell, yet as a prisoner, in his own house.

XXXVI. [p. 531.] Acts xxvii. 1. "And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul, *and certain other prisoners*, unto one named Julius." Since not only Paul, but certain other *prisoners*, were sent by the same ship into Italy, the text must be considered as carrying with it an intimation, that the sending of persons from Judea to be tried at Rome was an ordinary practice. That in truth it was so, is made out by a variety of examples which the writings of Josephus furnish: and, amongst others, by the following, which comes near both to the time and the subject of the instance in the Acts. "Felix, for some slight offence, *bound and sent to Rome* several priests of his acquaintance, and very good and honest men, to answer for themselves to Cæsar." Joseph. in Vit. sect. 3.

XXXVII. [p. 539.] Acts xi. 27. "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch; and there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world (or all the country); *which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar*."

Joseph. Antiq. l. xx. c. 4. sect. 2. "In their time (*i. e.* about

the fifth or sixth year of Claudius) a great dearth happened in Judea."

XXXVIII. [p. 555.] Acts xviii. 1, 2. "Because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome."

Suet. Claud. c. xxv. "Judæos, impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes, Româ expulit."

XXXIX. [p. 664.] Acts v. 37. "After this man, rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him."

Joseph. de Bell. l. vii. "He (*viz.* the person who in another place is called, by Josephus, Judas the Galilean or Judas of Galilee) persuaded not a few to enrol themselves when Cyrenius the censor was sent into Judea."

XL. [p. 942.] Acts xxi. 38. "Art not thou that Egyptian which, before these days, madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?"

Joseph. de Bell. l. ii. c. 13. sect. 5. "But the Egyptian false prophet brought a yet heavier disaster upon the Jews; for this impostor, coming into the country, and gaining the reputation of a prophet, gathered together thirty thousand men, who were deceived by him. Having brought them round out of the wilderness, up to the mount of Olives, he intended from thence to make his attack upon Jerusalem; but Felix, coming suddenly upon him with the Roman soldiers, prevented the attack.—A great number, or (as it should rather be rendered) the greatest part of those that were with him, were either slain or taken prisoners."

In these two passages, the designation of this impostor, an "Egyptian," without the proper name; "the wilderness;" his escape, though his followers were destroyed; the time of the transaction, in the presidentship of Felix, which could not be any long time before the words in Luke are supposed to have been spoken; are circumstances of close correspondence. There is one, and only one, point of disagreement, and that is, in the number of his followers, which in the Acts are called four thousand, and by Josephus thirty thousand: but, beside that the names of numbers, more than any other words, are liable to the errors of transcribers, we are in the present instance under the less concern to reconcile the evangelist with Josephus, as Josephus is not, in this point, consistent with himself. For whereas, in the passage here quoted, he calls the number

thirty thousand, and tells us that the greatest part, or a great number (according as his words are rendered) of those that were with him, were destroyed; in his *Antiquities*, he represents four hundred to have been killed upon this occasion, and two hundred taken prisoners<sup>a</sup>: which certainly was not the “greatest part,” nor “a great part,” nor “a great number,” out of thirty thousand. It is probable also, that Lysias and Josephus spoke of the expedition in its different stages: Lysias, of those who followed the Egyptian out of Jerusalem; Josephus, of all who were collected about him afterwards, from different quarters.

XLI. (Lardner’s *Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*, vol. iii. p. 21.) Acts xvii. 22. “Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious; for, as I passed by and beheld your devotions, *I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.”

*Diogenes Laertius*, who wrote about the year 210, in his history of Epimenides, who is supposed to have flourished nearly six hundred years before Christ, relates of him the following story: that, being invited to Athens for the purpose, he delivered the city from a pestilence in this manner;—“Taking several sheep, some black, others white, he had them up to the Areopagus, and then let them go where they would, and gave orders to those who followed them, wherever any of them should lie down, to sacrifice it to the god to whom it belonged; and so the plague ceased.—Hence,” says the historian, “it has come to pass, *that to this present time may be found in the boroughs of the Athenians ANONYMOUS altars*: a memorial of the expiation then made.”<sup>b</sup> These altars, it may be presumed, were called *anonymous*, because there was not the name of any particular deity inscribed upon them.

*Pausanias*, who wrote before the end of the second century, in his description of Athens, having mentioned an altar of Jupiter Olympius, adds, “*And nigh unto it is an altar of unknown gods*.”<sup>c</sup> And in another place, he speaks “*of altars of gods called unknown*.”<sup>d</sup>

*Philostratus*, who wrote in the beginning of the third century, records it as an observation of Apollonius Tyanæus, “That it

<sup>a</sup> Lib. xx. c. 7. sect. 6.

<sup>b</sup> In Epimenide, l. i. segm. 110.

<sup>c</sup> Paus. l. v. p. 412.

<sup>d</sup> Paus. l. i. p. 4.



was wise to speak well of all the gods, *especially at Athens, where altars of unknown demons were erected.*"<sup>a</sup>

The *author of the dialogue Philopatris*, by many supposed to have been Lucian, who wrote about the year 170, by others some anonymous Heathen writer of the fourth century, makes Critias swear *by the unknown god of Athens*; and, near the end of the dialogue, has these words, "But let us find out *the unknown god at Athens*, and, stretching our hands to heaven, offer to him our praises and thanksgivings."<sup>b</sup>

This is a very curious and a very important coincidence. It appears beyond controversy, that altars with this inscription were existing at Athens, at the time when Saint Paul is alleged to have been there. It seems also (which is very worthy of observation) that this inscription was *peculiar* to the Athenians. There is no evidence that there were altars inscribed "to the unknown god" in any other country. Supposing the history of Saint Paul to have been a fable, how is it possible that such a writer as the author of the Acts of the Apostles was should hit upon a circumstance so extraordinary, and introduce it by an allusion so suitable to Saint Paul's office and character?

The examples here collected will be sufficient, I hope, to satisfy us, that the writers of the Christian history knew something of what they were writing about. The argument is also strengthened by the following considerations:

I. That these agreements appear, not only in articles of public history, but sometimes, in minute, recondite, and very peculiar circumstances, in which, of all others, a forger is most likely to have been found tripping.

II. That the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place forty years after the commencement of the Christian institution, produced such a change in the state of the country, and the condition of the Jews, that a writer who was unacquainted with the circumstances of the nation *before* that event, would find it difficult to avoid mistakes, in endeavouring to give detailed accounts of transactions connected with those circumstances, forasmuch as he could no longer have a living exemplar to copy from.

III. That there appears, in the writers of the New Testament, a knowledge of the affairs of those times, which we do

<sup>a</sup> Philos. Apoll. Tyan. l. vi. c. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Lucian. in Philop. tom. ii. Græv. p. 767, 780.

not find in authors of later ages. In particular, "many of the Christian writers of the second and third centuries, and of the following ages, had false notions concerning the state of Judea, between the nativity of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem."<sup>a</sup> Therefore *they* could not have composed our histories.

Amidst so many conformities, we are not to wonder that we meet with some difficulties. The principal of these I will put down, together with the solutions which they have received. But in doing this, I must be contented with a brevity better suited to the limits of my volume than to the nature of a controversial argument. For the historical proofs of my assertions, and for the Greek criticisms upon which some of them are founded, I refer the reader to the second volume of the first part of Dr. Lardner's large work.

I. The taxing during which Jesus was born, was "first made," as we read, according to our translation, in Saint Luke, "whilst Cyrenius was governor of Syria."<sup>b</sup> Now it turns out that Cyrenius was not governor of Syria until twelve, or, at the soonest, ten years after the birth of Christ; and that a taxing, census, or assessment, was made in Judea, in the beginning of his government. The charge, therefore, brought against the evangelist is, that, intending to refer to this taxing, he has misplaced the date of it by an error of ten or twelve years.

The answer to the accusation is found in his using the word "first:"—"And this taxing was *first* made:" for, according to the mistake imputed to the evangelist, this word could have no signification whatever; it could have had no place in his narrative; because, let it relate to what it will, taxing, census, enrolment, or assessment, it imports that the writer had more than one of those in contemplation. It acquits him therefore of the charge: it is inconsistent with the supposition of his knowing only of the taxing in the beginning of Cyrenius's government. And if the evangelist knew (which this word proves that he did) of some other taxing beside that, it is too much, for the sake of convicting him of a mistake, to lay it down as certain that he intended to refer to *that*.

The sentence in Saint Luke may be construed thus: "This was the first assessment (or enrolment) of Cyrenius, governor of Syria;"<sup>c</sup> the words "governor of Syria" being used after the

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, part i. vol. ii. p. 960.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. ii. ver. 2.

<sup>c</sup> If the word which we render "first," be rendered "before," which it has been strongly contended that the Greek idiom allows of, the whole difficulty vanishes: for then the passage would be,—“Now this taxing was made before Cyrenius was

name of Cyrenius as his addition or title. And this title belonging to him at the time of writing the account, was naturally enough subjoined to his name, though acquired after the transaction which the account describes. A modern writer who was not very exact in the choice of his expressions, in relating the affairs of the East Indies, might easily say, that such a thing was done by Governor Hastings; though, in truth, the thing had been done by him before his advancement to the station from which he received the name of governor. And this, as we contend, is precisely the inaccuracy which has produced the difficulty in Saint Luke.

At any rate it appears from the form of the expression, that he had two taxings or enrolments in contemplation. And if Cyrenius had been sent upon this business into Judea, before he became governor of Syria, (against which supposition there is no proof, but rather external evidence of an enrolment going on about this time under some person or other<sup>a</sup>;) then the census on all hands acknowledged to have been made by him in the beginning of his government, would form a second, so as to occasion the other to be called the *first*.

II. Another chronological objection arises upon a date assigned in the beginning of the third chapter of Saint Luke<sup>b</sup>. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar,—Jesus *began to be about thirty* years of age:" for, supposing Jesus to have been born, as Saint Matthew and Saint Luke also himself, relate, in the time of Herod, he must, according to the dates given in Josephus and by the Roman historians, have been at least thirty-one years of age in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. If he was born, as Saint Matthew's narrative intimates, one or two years before Herod's death, he would have been thirty-two or thirty-three years old at that time.

This is the difficulty: the solution turns upon an alteration in the construction of the Greek. Saint Luke's words in the original are allowed, by the general opinion of learned men, to

governor of Syria;" which corresponds with the chronology. But I rather choose to argue, that, however the word "first" be rendered, to give it a meaning at all, it militates with the objection. In this I think there can be no mistake.

<sup>a</sup> Josephus (Antiq. xvii. c. 2. sect. 6.) has this remarkable passage: "When therefore the whole Jewish nation took an oath to be faithful to Cæsar, and the interests of the king." This transaction corresponds in the course of the history with the time of Christ's birth. What is called a census, and which we render taxing, was delivering upon oath an account of their property. This might be accompanied with an oath of fidelity, or might be mistaken by Josephus for it.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, part i. vol. ii. p. 768.



signify, not, "that Jesus began to be about thirty years of age," but "that he was about thirty years of age when he began his ministry." This construction being admitted, the adverb "about" gives us all the latitude we want, and more especially when applied, as it is in the present instance, to a decimal number; for such numbers, even without this qualifying addition, are often used in a laxer sense than is here contended for<sup>a</sup>.

III. Acts v. 36. "For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who were slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to nought."

Josephus has preserved the account of an impostor of the name of Theudas, who created some disturbances, and was slain; but according to the date assigned to this man's appearance, (in which, however, it is very possible that Josephus may have been mistaken<sup>b</sup>,) it must have been, at the least, seven years after Gamaliel's speech, of which this text is a part, was delivered. It has been replied to the objection<sup>c</sup>, that there might be two impostors of this name: and it has been observed, in order to give a general probability to the solution, that the same thing appears to have happened in other instances of the same kind. It is proved from Josephus, that there were not fewer than four persons of the name of Simon within forty years, and not fewer than three of the name of Judas within ten years, who were all leaders of insurrections: and it is likewise recorded by this historian, that upon the death of Herod the Great (which agrees very well with the time of the commotion referred to by Gamaliel, and with his manner of stating that time, "before these days") there were innumerable disturbances in Judea<sup>d</sup>. Archbishop Usher was of opinion, that one of the three Judases above-mentioned was Gamaliel's Theudas<sup>e</sup>; and that with a less variation of the name than we actually find in

<sup>a</sup> Livy, speaking of the peace which the conduct of Romulus had procured to the state, during the *whole* reign of his successor (Numa), has these words\*:—"Ab illo enim profectis viribus datis tantum valuit, ut, in *quadraginta* deinde annos, tutam pacem haberet:" yet afterwards in the same chapter, "Romulus," he says, "septem et triginta regnavit annos. Numa tres et quadraginta."

<sup>b</sup> Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament, (Marsh's translation,) vol. i. p. 61.

<sup>c</sup> Lardner, part i. vol. ii. p. 92.

<sup>d</sup> Antiq. l. 17. c. 12. sect. 4.

<sup>e</sup> Annals, p. 797.

the Gospel, where one of the twelve apostles is called, by Luke, Judas; and by Mark, Thaddeus<sup>a</sup>. Origen, however he came at his information, appears to have believed that there was an impostor of the name of Theudas before the nativity of Christ<sup>b</sup>.

IV. Matt. xxiii. 34. "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of *Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.*"

There is a Zacharias, whose death is related in the second book of Chronicles<sup>c</sup>, in a manner which perfectly supports our Saviour's allusion. But this Zacharias was the son of *Jehoiada*.

There is also Zacharias the prophet; who was the son of Barachiah, and is so described in the superscription of his prophecy, but of whose death we have no account.

I have little doubt, but that the first Zacharias was the person spoken of by our Saviour: and that the name of the father has been since added, or changed, by some one, who took it from the title of the prophecy, which happened to be better known to him than the history in the Chronicles.

There is likewise a Zacharias, the son of Baruch, related by Josephus to have been slain in the temple a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem. It has been insinuated, that the words put into our Saviour's mouth contain a reference to this transaction, and were composed by some writer, who either confounded the time of the transaction with our Saviour's age, or inadvertently overlooked the anachronism.

Now suppose it to have been so; suppose these words to have been suggested by the transaction related in Josephus, and to have been falsely ascribed to Christ; and observe what extraordinary coincidences (accidentally, as it must in that case have been) attend the forger's mistake.

<sup>a</sup> Luke vi. 16. Mark iii. 18.

<sup>b</sup> Orig. cont. Cels. p. 44.

<sup>c</sup> "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord." 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21.

First, that we have a Zacharias in the book of Chronicles, whose death, and the manner of it, corresponds with the allusion.

Secondly, that although the name of this person's father be erroneously put down in the Gospel, yet we have a way of accounting for the error by showing another Zacharias in the Jewish Scriptures much better known than the former, whose patronymic was actually that which appears in the text.

Every one who thinks upon the subject, will find these to be circumstances which could not have met together in a mistake, which did not proceed from the circumstances themselves.

I have noticed, I think, all the difficulties of this kind. They are few: some of them admit of a clear, others of a probable solution. The reader will compare them with the number, the variety, the closeness, and the satisfactoriness, of the instances which are to be set against them; and he will remember the scantiness, in many cases, of our intelligence, and that difficulties always attend imperfect information.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### UNDESIGNED COINCIDENCES.

BETWEEN the letters which bear the name of Saint Paul in our collection, and his history in the Acts of the Apostles, there exist many notes of correspondency. The simple perusal of the writings is sufficient to prove that neither the history was taken from the letters, nor the letters from the history. And the *undesignedness* of the agreements (which undesignedness is gathered from their latency, their minuteness, their obliquity, the suitableness of the circumstances in which they consist, to the places in which those circumstances occur, and the circuitous references by which they are traced out) demonstrates that they have not been produced by meditation, or by any fraudulent contrivance. But coincidences, from which these causes are excluded, and which are too close and numerous to be accounted for by accidental concurrences of fiction, must necessarily have truth for their foundation.

This argument appeared to my mind of so much value, (especially for its assuming nothing beside the existence of the



books,) that I have pursued it through Saint Paul's thirteen epistles, in a work published by me four years ago, under the title of *Horæ Paulinæ*. I am sensible how feebly any argument which depends upon an induction of particulars, is represented without examples. On which account, I wished to have abridged my own volume, in the manner in which I have treated Dr. Lardner's in the preceding chapter. But, upon making the attempt, I did not find it in my power to render the articles intelligible by fewer words than I have there used. I must be content, therefore, to refer the reader to the work itself. And I would particularly invite his attention to the observations which are made in it upon the first three epistles. I persuade myself that he will find the proofs, both of agreement, and undesignedness, supplied by these epistles, sufficient to support the conclusion which is there maintained, in favour both of the genuineness of the writings and the truth of the narrative.

It remains only, in this place, to point out how the argument *bears* upon the general question of the Christian history.

First, Saint Paul in these letters affirms, in unequivocal terms, his own performance of miracles, and, what ought particularly to be remembered, "*That miracles were the signs of an Apostle.*"<sup>a</sup> If this testimony come from Saint Paul's own hand, it is invaluable. And that it does so, the argument before us fixes in my mind a firm assurance.

Secondly, it shows that the series of action, represented in the epistles of Saint Paul, was real; which alone lays a foundation for the proposition which forms the subject of the first part of our present work, *viz.* that the original witnesses of the Christian history devoted themselves to lives of toil, suffering, and danger, in consequence of their belief of the truth of that history, and for the sake of communicating the knowledge of it to others.

Thirdly, it proves that Luke, or whoever was the author of the Acts of the Apostles, (for the argument does not depend upon the name of the author, though I know no reason for questioning it,) was well acquainted with Saint Paul's history; and that he probably was, what he professes himself to be, a companion of Saint Paul's travels; which, if true, establishes, in a considerable degree, the credit even of his Gospel, because it shows, that the writer, from his time, situation, and connexions,

<sup>a</sup> Rom. xv. 18, 19. 2 Cor. xii. 12.

possessed opportunities of informing himself truly concerning the transactions which he relates. I have little difficulty in applying to the Gospel of Saint Luke what is proved concerning the Acts of the Apostles, considering them as two parts of the same history; for though there are instances of *second* parts being forgeries, I know none where the second part is genuine, and the first not so.

I will only observe as a sequel of the argument, though not noticed in my work, the remarkable similitude between the style of Saint John's Gospel, and of Saint John's Epistle. The style of Saint John's is not at all the style of Saint Paul's Epistles, though both are very singular; nor is it the style of Saint James's or of Saint Peter's Epistles: but it bears a resemblance to the style of the Gospel inscribed with Saint John's name, so far as that resemblance can be expected to appear which is not in simple narrative, so much as in reflections, and in the representation of discourses. Writings so circumstanced prove themselves, and one another, to be genuine. This correspondence is the more valuable, as the epistle itself asserts, in Saint John's manner indeed, but in terms sufficiently explicit, the writer's personal knowledge of Christ's history: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life; that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you."<sup>a</sup> Who would not desire,—who perceives not the value of an account, delivered by a writer so well informed as this?

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### OF THE HISTORY OF THE RESURRECTION.

THE history of the resurrection of Christ is a part of the evidence of Christianity: but I do not know, whether the proper strength of this passage of the Christian history, or wherein its peculiar value, as a head of evidence, consists, be generally understood. It is not that, as a miracle, the resurrection ought to be accounted a more decisive proof of supernatural agency than other miracles are; it is not that, as it stands in the Gospels, it is better attested than some others; it is not, for either of these

<sup>a</sup> Ch. i. ver. 1—3.

reasons, that more weight belongs to it than to other miracles, but for the following, *viz.* That it is completely certain that the apostles of Christ, and the first teachers of Christianity, asserted the fact. And this would have been certain, if the four Gospels had been lost, or never written. Every piece of Scripture recognises the resurrection. Every epistle of every apostle, every author contemporary with the apostles, of the age immediately succeeding the apostles, every writing from that age to the present, genuine or spurious, on the side of Christianity or against it, concur in representing the resurrection of Christ as an article of his history, received without doubt or disagreement by all who called themselves Christians, as alleged from the beginning by the propagators of the institution, and alleged as the centre of their testimony. Nothing, I apprehend, which a man does not himself see or hear, can be more certain to him than this point. I do not mean, that nothing can be more certain, than that Christ rose from the dead; but that nothing can be more certain, than that his apostles, and the first teachers of Christianity, gave out that he did so. In the other parts of the Gospel narrative, a question may be made, whether the things related of Christ be the very things which the apostles and first teachers of the religion delivered concerning him? And this question depends a good deal upon the evidence we possess of the genuineness, or rather, perhaps, of the antiquity, credit, and reception of the books. On the subject of the resurrection, no such discussion is necessary, because no such doubt can be entertained. The only points which can enter into our consideration are, whether the apostles knowingly published a falsehood, or whether they were themselves deceived; whether either of these suppositions be possible. The first, I think, is pretty generally given up. The nature of the undertaking, and of the men; the extreme unlikelihood that such men should engage in such a measure as a *scheme*; their personal toils, and dangers, and sufferings, in the cause; their appropriation of their whole time to the object; the warm and seemingly unaffected zeal and earnestness with which they profess their sincerity; exempt their memory from the suspicion of imposture. The solution more deserving of notice, is that which would resolve the conduct of the apostles into *enthusiasm*; which would class the evidence of Christ's resurrection with the numerous stories that are extant of the apparitions of dead men. There are circumstances in the narrative, as it is preserved in our histories,



which destroy this comparison entirely. It was not one person, but many, who saw him; they saw him not only separately but together, not only by night but by day, not at a distance but near, not once but several times; they not only saw him, but touched him, conversed with him, ate with him, examined his person to satisfy their doubts. These particulars are decisive: but they stand, I do admit, upon the credit of our records. I would answer, therefore, the insinuation of enthusiasm, by a circumstance which arises out of the nature of the thing; and the reality of which must be confessed by all who allow, what I believe is not denied, that the resurrection of Christ, whether true or false, was asserted by his disciples from the beginning; and that circumstance is, the non-production of the dead body. It is related in the history, what indeed the story of the resurrection necessarily implies, that the corpse was missing out of the sepulchre: it is related also in the history, that the Jews reported that the followers of Christ had stolen it away<sup>a</sup>. And this account, though loaded with great improbabilities, such as the situation of the disciples, their fears for their own safety at the time, the unlikelihood of their expecting to succeed, the difficulty of actual success<sup>b</sup>, and the inevitable consequence of detection and failure, was, nevertheless, the most credible account that could be given of the matter. But it proceeds entirely upon the supposition of fraud, as all the old objections did. What account can be given of the *body*, upon the supposition of enthusiasm? It is impossible our Lord's followers could believe that he was risen from the dead, if his corpse was lying before them. No enthusiasm ever reached to such a pitch of extravagancy as that: a spirit may be an illusion; a body is a real thing, an object of sense, in which there can be no mistake. All accounts of spectres leave the body in the grave. And, although the body of Christ might be removed by *fraud*, and for the purposes of fraud, yet without any such in-

<sup>a</sup> "And this saying," Saint Matthew writes, "is commonly reported amongst the Jews until this day," (chap. xxviii. 15). The evangelist may be thought good authority as to this point, even by those who do not admit his evidence in every other point: and this point is sufficient to prove that the body was missing.

It has been rightly, I think, observed by Dr. Townshend, (Dis. upon the Res. p. 126,) that the story of the guards carried collusion upon the face of it:—"His disciples came by night, and stole him away, while we slept." Men in their circumstances would not have made such an acknowledgement of their negligence, without previous assurances of protection and impunity.

<sup>b</sup> "Especially at the full moon, the city full of people, many probably passing the whole night, as Jesus and his disciples had done, in the open air, the sepulchre so near the city as to be now enclosed within the walls." Priestley on the Resurr. p. 24.

tention, and by sincere but deluded men, (which is the representation of the apostolic character we are now examining,) no such attempt could be made. The presence and the absence of the dead body are alike inconsistent with the hypothesis of enthusiasm; for, if present, it must have cured their enthusiasm at once; if absent, fraud, not enthusiasm, must have carried it away.

But further, if we admit, upon the concurrent testimony of all the histories, so much of the account as states that the religion of Jesus was set up at Jerusalem, and set up with asserting, in the very place in which he had been buried, and a few days after he had been buried, his resurrection out of the grave, it is evident that, if his body could have been found, the Jews would have produced it, as the shortest and completest answer possible to the whole story. The attempt of the apostles could not have survived this refutation a moment. If we also admit, upon the authority of Saint Matthew, that the Jews were advertised of the expectation of Christ's followers, and that they had taken due precaution in consequence of this notice, and that the body was in marked and public custody, the observation receives more force still. For, notwithstanding their precaution, and although thus prepared and forewarned; when the story of the resurrection of Christ came forth, as it immediately did; when it was publicly asserted by his disciples, and made the ground and basis of their preaching in his name, and collecting followers to his religion, the Jews had not the body to produce; but were obliged to meet the testimony of the apostles by an answer not containing indeed any impossibility in itself, but absolutely inconsistent with the supposition of their integrity; that is, in other words, inconsistent with the supposition which would resolve their conduct into enthusiasm.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN this argument, the first consideration is the fact; in what degree, within what time, and to what extent, Christianity actually was propagated.

The accounts of the matter, which can be collected from our books, are as follow: A *few days* after Christ's disappearance out of the world, we find an assembly of disciples at Jerusalem, to the number of "about one hundred and twenty;"<sup>a</sup> which hundred and twenty were, probably, a little association of believers, met together, not merely as believers in Christ, but as personally connected with the apostles, and with one another. Whatever was the number of believers then in Jerusalem, we have no reason to be surprised that so small a company should assemble: for there is no proof, that the followers of Christ were yet formed into a society; that the society was reduced into any order; that it was at this time even understood that a new religion (in the sense which that term conveys to us) was to be set up in the world, or how the professors of that religion were to be distinguished from the rest of mankind. The death of Christ had left, we may suppose, the generality of his disciples in great doubt, both as to what they were to do, and concerning what was to follow.

This meeting was holden, as we have already said, a few days after Christ's ascension: for, ten days after that event was the day of Pentecost, when, as our history relates<sup>b</sup>, upon a signal display of divine agency attending the persons of the apostles, there were added to the society "about three thousand souls."<sup>c</sup> But here, it is not, I think, to be taken, that these three thousand were all converted by this single miracle; but rather that many, who before were believers in Christ, became now professors of Christianity; that is to say, when they found that a religion was to be established, a society formed and set up in the name of Christ, governed by his laws, avowing their belief in his mission, united amongst themselves, and separated from the rest of the world, by visible distinctions; in pursuance of their former conviction, and by virtue of what they had heard and seen and known of Christ's history, they publicly became members of it.

We read in the fourth chapter<sup>d</sup> of the Acts, that, soon after this, "the number of the men," *i. e.* the society openly professing their belief in Christ, "was about five thousand." So that here is an increase of two thousand within a very short time. And it is probable that there were many, both now and afterwards, who, although they believed in Christ, did not think it

<sup>a</sup> Acts i. 15.<sup>b</sup> Ib. ii. 1.<sup>c</sup> Ib. ii. 41.<sup>d</sup> Verse 4.



necessary to join themselves to this society; or who waited to see what was likely to become of it. Gamaliel, whose advice to the Jewish council is recorded Acts v. 34, appears to have been of this description; perhaps Nicodemus, and perhaps also Joseph of Arimathea. This class of men, their character and their rank, are likewise pointed out by Saint John, in the twelfth chapter of his Gospel: "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also, many believed on him: but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Persons such as these might admit the miracles of Christ, without being immediately convinced that they were under obligation to make a public profession of Christianity, at the risk of all that was dear to them in life, and even of life itself<sup>a</sup>.

Christianity, however, proceeded to increase in Jerusalem by a progress equally rapid with its first success; for, in the next<sup>b</sup> chapter of our history, we read that, "believers were the more added to the Lord, *multitudes* both of men and women." And this enlargement of the new society appears in the first verse of the succeeding chapter, wherein we are told, that, "when the number of the disciples was *multiplied*, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected;"<sup>c</sup> and afterwards, in the same chapter, it is declared expressly, that "the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

This I call the first period in the propagation of Christianity. It commences with the ascension of Christ, and extends, as may be collected from incidental notes of time<sup>d</sup>, to something more than one year after that event. During which term, the

<sup>a</sup> "Beside those who professed, and those who rejected and opposed, Christianity; there were, in all probability, multitudes between both, neither perfect Christians, nor yet unbelievers. They had a favourable opinion of the Gospel, but worldly considerations made them unwilling to own it. There were many circumstances which inclined them to think that Christianity was a divine revelation, but there were many inconveniences which attended the open profession of it; and they could not find in themselves courage enough to bear them to disoblige their friends and family, to ruin their fortunes, to lose their reputation, their liberty, and their life, for the sake of the new religion. Therefore they were willing to hope, that if they endeavoured to observe the great principles of morality, which Christ had represented as the principal part, the sum and substance of religion; if they thought honourably of the Gospel; if they offered no injury to the Christians; if they did them all the services that they could *safely* perform; they were willing to hope, that God would accept this, and that He would excuse and forgive the rest." Jortin's Dis. on the Christ. Rel. p. 91. ed. 4.

<sup>b</sup> Acts v. 14.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. vi. 1.

<sup>d</sup> Vide Pearson's Antiq. l. xviii. c. 7. Benson's History of Christ, b. i. p. 146.

preaching of Christianity, so far as our documents inform us, was confined to the single city of Jerusalem. And how did it succeed there? The first assembly which we meet with of Christ's disciples, and that a few days after his removal from the world, consisted of "one hundred and twenty." About a week after this, "three thousand were added in one day;" and the number of Christians, publicly baptized, and publicly associating together, was very soon increased to "five thousand." "Multitudes both of men and women continued to be added;" "disciples multiplied greatly," and "many of the Jewish priesthood, as well as others, became obedient to the faith;" and this within a space of less than two years from the commencement of the institution.

By reason of a persecution raised against the church at Jerusalem, the converts were driven from that city, and dispersed throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria<sup>a</sup>. Wherever they came, they brought their religion with them: for, our historian informs us<sup>b</sup>, that "they, that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word." The effect of this preaching comes afterwards to be noticed, where the historian is led, in the course of his narrative, to observe, that *then* (*i. e.* about three years<sup>c</sup> posterior to this) "the churches had rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." This was the work of the second period, which comprises about four years.

Hitherto the preaching of the Gospel had been confined to Jews, to Jewish proselytes, and to Samaritans. And I cannot forbear from setting down in this place an observation of Mr. Bryant, which appears to me to be perfectly well founded;—"The Jews still remain: but how seldom is it that we can make a single proselyte! There is reason to think, that there were more converted by the apostles in one day, than have since been won over in the last thousand years."<sup>d</sup>

It was not yet known to the apostles, that they were at liberty to propose the religion to mankind at large. That "mystery," as Saint Paul calls it<sup>e</sup>, and as it then was, was revealed to Peter by an especial miracle. It appears to have been<sup>f</sup> about seven years after Christ's ascension, that the Gospel was preached

<sup>a</sup> Acts viii. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Verse 4.

<sup>c</sup> Benson, b. i. p. 207.

<sup>d</sup> Bryant on the Truth of the Christian Religion, p. 112.

<sup>e</sup> Eph. iii. 3—6.

<sup>f</sup> Benson, book ii. p. 236.

to the Gentiles of Cesarea. A year after this, a great multitude of Gentiles were converted at Antioch in Syria. The expressions employed by the historian are these:—"A great number believed, and turned to the Lord;" "much people was added unto the Lord;" "the apostles Barnabas and Paul taught much people."<sup>a</sup> Upon Herod's death, which happened in the next year<sup>b</sup>, it is observed, that "the word of God grew and multiplied."<sup>c</sup> Three years from this time, upon the preaching of Paul at Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, "a great multitude both of Jews and Greeks believed:"<sup>d</sup> and afterwards, in the course of this very progress, he is represented as "making many disciples" at Derbe, a principal city in the same district. Three years<sup>e</sup> after this, which brings us to sixteen after the ascension, the apostles wrote a public letter from Jerusalem to the Gentile converts in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, with which letter Paul travelled through these countries, and found the churches "established in the faith, and increasing in number daily."<sup>f</sup> From Asia, the apostle proceeded into Greece, where, soon after his arrival in Macedonia, we find him at Thessalonica; in which city, "some of the Jews believed, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude."<sup>g</sup> We meet also here with an accidental hint of the general progress of the Christian mission, in the exclamation of the tumultuous Jews of Thessalonica, "that they who had turned the world upside down, were come thither also."<sup>h</sup> At Berea, the next city at which Saint Paul arrives, the historian, who was present, informs us that "*many* of the Jews believed."<sup>i</sup> The next year and a half of Saint Paul's ministry was spent at Corinth. Of his success in that city, we receive the following intimations; "that *many* of the Corinthians believed and were baptized;" and "that it was revealed to the apostle by Christ, that he had *much* people in that city."<sup>k</sup> Within less than a year after his departure from Corinth, and twenty-five<sup>l</sup> years after the ascension, Saint Paul fixed his station at Ephesus, for the space of two years<sup>m</sup> and something more. The effect of his ministry in that city and neighbourhood drew from the historian a reflection, how "mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."<sup>n</sup> And at the conclusion of this period, we find Demetrius at the head of a

<sup>a</sup> Acts xi. 21. 24. 26.<sup>d</sup> Ib. xiv. 1.<sup>f</sup> Acts xvi. 5.<sup>l</sup> Ib. xvii. 12.<sup>b</sup> Benson, book ii. p. 289.<sup>c</sup> Benson's History of Christ, book iii. p. 50.<sup>e</sup> Ib. xvii. 4.<sup>k</sup> Ib. xviii. 8—10.<sup>m</sup> Acts xix. 10.<sup>g</sup> Acts xii. 24.<sup>h</sup> Ib. xvii. 6.<sup>i</sup> Benson, book iii. p. 160.<sup>n</sup> Acts xix. 20.



party, who were alarmed by the progress of the religion, complaining, that “not only at Ephesus, but also throughout all Asia, (*i. e.* the province of Lydia, and the country adjoining to Ephesus,) this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people.”<sup>a</sup> Beside these accounts, there occurs, incidentally, mention of converts at Rome, Alexandria, Athens, Cyprus, Cyrene, Macedonia, Philippi.

This is the third period in the propagation of Christianity, setting off in the seventh year after the ascension, and ending at the twenty-eighth. Now, lay these three periods together, and observe how the progress of the religion by these accounts is represented. The institution, which properly *began* only after its Author’s removal from the world, before the end of thirty years had spread itself through Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, almost all the numerous districts of the Lesser Asia, through Greece, and the islands of the *Ægean* Sea, the sea-coast of Africa, and had extended itself to Rome, and into Italy. At Antioch in Syria, at Joppa, Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, Berea, Iconium, Derbe, Antioch in Pisidia, at Lydda, Saron, the number of converts is intimated by the expressions, “a great number,” “great multitudes,” “much people.” Converts are mentioned, without any designation of their number<sup>b</sup>, at Tyre, Cesarea, Troas, Athens, Philippi, Lystra, Damascus. During all this time, Jerusalem continued not only the centre of the mission, but a principal seat of the religion; for when Saint Paul returned thither at the conclusion of the period of which we are now considering the accounts, the other apostles pointed out to him, as a reason for his compliance with their advice, “how many thousands (myriads, ten thousands) there were in that city who believed.”<sup>c</sup>

Upon this abstract, and the writing from which it is drawn, the following observations seem material to be made:

I. That the account comes from a person, who was himself concerned in a portion of what he relates, and was contemporary

<sup>a</sup> Acts xix. 26.

<sup>b</sup> Considering the extreme conciseness of many parts of the history, the silence about the numbers of converts is no proof of their paucity; for at Philippi, no mention whatever is made of the number, yet Saint Paul addressed an epistle to that church. The churches of Galatia, and the affairs of those churches, were considerable enough to be the subject of another letter, and of much of Saint Paul’s solicitude: yet no account is preserved in the history of his success, or even of his preaching in that country, except the slight notice which these words convey:—“When they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia—they assayed to go into Bithynia.” Acts xvi. 6.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xxi. 20.

with the whole of it; who visited Jerusalem, and frequented the society of those who had acted, and were acting the chief parts in the transaction. I lay down this point positively; for had the ancient attestations to this valuable record been less satisfactory than they are, the unaffectedness and simplicity with which the author notes his presence upon certain occasions, and the entire absence of art and design from these notices, would have been sufficient to persuade my mind, that, whoever he was, he actually lived in the times, and occupied the situation, in which he represents himself to be. When I say, "whoever he was," I do not mean to cast a doubt upon the name to which antiquity hath ascribed the Acts of the Apostles, (for there is no cause that I am acquainted with, for questioning it,) but to observe, that, in such a case as this, the time and situation of the author is of more importance than his name; and that *these* appear from the work itself, and in the most unsuspecting form.

II. That this account is a very *incomplete* account of the preaching and propagation of Christianity; I mean, that, if what we read in the history be true, much more than what the history contains must be true also. For, although the narrative from which our information is derived has been entitled the Acts of the Apostles, it is in fact a history of the twelve apostles only during a short time of their continuing together at Jerusalem; and even of this period the account is very concise. The work afterwards consists of a few important passages of Peter's ministry, of the speech and death of Stephen, of the preaching of Philip the deacon; and the sequel of the volume, that is, two thirds of the whole, is taken up with the conversion, the travels, the discourses, and history of the new apostle, Paul; in which history also, large portions of time are often passed over with very scanty notice.

III. That the account, so far as it goes, is for this very reason more credible. Had it been the author's design to have *displayed* the early progress of Christianity, he would undoubtedly have collected, or, at least, have set forth, accounts of the preaching of the rest of the apostles, who cannot, without extreme improbability, be supposed to have remained silent and inactive, or not to have met with a share of that success which attended their colleagues. To which may be added, as an observation of the same kind,

IV. That the intimations of the number of converts, and of

the success of the preaching of the apostles, come out for the most part *incidentally*; are drawn from the historian by the occasion; such as the murmuring of the Grecian converts; the rest from persecution; Herod's death; the sending of Barnabas to Antioch, and Barnabas calling Paul to his assistance; Paul coming to a place, and finding there disciples; the clamour of the Jews; the complaint of artificers interested in the support of the popular religion; the reason assigned to induce Paul to give satisfaction to the Christians of Jerusalem. Had it not been for these occasions, it is probable that no notice whatever would have been taken of the number of converts in several of the passages in which that notice now appears. All this tends to remove the suspicion of a design to exaggerate or deceive.

PARALLEL TESTIMONIES with the history, are the letters of Saint Paul, and of the other apostles, which have come down to us. Those of Saint Paul are addressed to the churches of Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, the church of Galatia, and, if the inscription be right, of Ephesus; his ministry at all which places is recorded in the history: to the church of Colosse, or rather to the churches of Colosse and Laodicea jointly, which he had not then visited. They recognise by reference the churches of Judea, the churches of Asia, and "all the churches of the Gentiles."<sup>a</sup> In the epistle<sup>b</sup> to the Romans, the author is led to deliver a remarkable declaration concerning the extent of his preaching, its efficacy, and the cause to which he ascribes it,—“to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.” In the Epistle to the Colossians<sup>c</sup>, we find an oblique but very strong signification of the then general state of the Christian mission, at least as it appeared to Saint Paul:—“If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and *which was preached to every creature which is under heaven*,” which Gospel, he had reminded them near the beginning<sup>d</sup> of his letter, “was present with them, *as it was in all the world*.” The expressions are hyperbolical; but they are hyperboles which could only be used by a writer who entertained a strong sense of the subject. The

<sup>a</sup> Thess. ii. 14.<sup>b</sup> Rom. xv. 18, 19.<sup>c</sup> Col. i. 23.<sup>d</sup> Ib. i. 6.



first epistle of Peter accosts the Christians dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

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It comes next to be considered, how far these accounts are confirmed, or followed up, by other evidence.

Tacitus, in delivering a relation, which has already been laid before the reader, of the fire which happened at Rome in the tenth year of Nero, (which coincides with the thirtieth year after Christ's ascension,) asserts, that the emperor, in order to suppress the rumours of having been himself the author of the mischief, procured the Christians to be accused. Of which Christians, thus brought into his narrative, the following is so much of the historian's account, as belongs to our present purpose: "They had their denomination from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, but reached the city also. At first, they only were apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect; afterwards *a vast multitude* were discovered by them." This testimony to the early propagation of Christianity is extremely material. It is from an historian of great reputation, living near the time; from a stranger and an enemy to the religion; and it joins immediately with the period through which the Scripture accounts extend. It establishes these points: that the religion began at Jerusalem; that it spread throughout Judea; that it had reached Rome, and not only so, but that it had there obtained a great number of converts. This was about six years after the time that Saint Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, and something more than two years after he arrived there himself. The converts to the religion were then so numerous at Rome, that of those who were betrayed by the information of the persons first persecuted, a great multitude (*multitudo ingens*) were discovered and seized.

It seems probable, that the temporary check which Tacitus represents Christianity to have received (*repressa in præsens*) referred to the persecution at Jerusalem, which followed the death of Stephen (Acts viii.); and which, by dispersing the converts, caused the institution, in some measure, to disappear. Its second eruption at the same place, and within a short time, has much in it of the character of truth. It was the

firmness and perseverance of men who knew what they relied upon.

Next in order of time, and perhaps superior in importance, is the testimony of Pliny the Younger. Pliny was the Roman governor of Pontus and Bithynia, two considerable districts in the northern part of Asia Minor. The situation in which he found his province, led him to apply to the emperor (Trajan) for his direction as to the conduct he was to hold towards the Christians. The letter in which this application is contained was written not quite eighty years after Christ's ascension. The president, in this letter, states the measures he had already pursued, and then adds, as his reason for resorting to the emperor's counsel and authority, the following words:—"Suspending all judicial proceedings, I have recourse to you for advice; for it has appeared to me a matter highly deserving consideration, especially on account of the great number of persons who are in danger of suffering: for, many of all ages, and of every rank, of both sexes likewise, are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country. Nevertheless it seemed to me, that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that the temples, which were almost forsaken, begin to be more frequented; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived. Victims, likewise, are everywhere (passim) bought up; whereas, for some time, there were few to purchase them. Whence it is easy to imagine, that numbers of men might be reclaimed, if pardon were granted to those that shall repent."\*

It is obvious to observe, that the passage of Pliny's letter, here quoted, proves, not only that the Christians in Pontus and Bithynia were now numerous, but that they had subsisted there for some considerable time. "It is certain," he says, "that the temples, which were almost forsaken, (plainly ascribing this desertion of the popular worship to the prevalency of Christianity,) begin to be more frequented; and the sacred solemnities, after a *long* intermission, are revived." There are also two clauses in the former part of the letter which indicate the same thing; one, in which he declares that he had "never been present at any trials of Christians, and therefore knew not what was the usual subject of inquiry and punishment, or how far either was wont to be urged." The second clause is the follow-

\* C. Plin. Trajano Imp. lib. x. ep. xcvi.

ing: "Others were named by an informer, who, at first, confessed themselves Christians, and afterwards denied it; the rest said, they had been Christians, some three years ago, some longer, and some about twenty years." It is also apparent, that Pliny speaks of the Christians as a description of men well known to the person to whom he writes. His first sentence concerning them is, "I have never been present at the trials of Christians." This mention of the name of Christians, without any preparatory explanation, shows that it was a term familiar both to the writer of the letter, and the person to whom it was addressed. Had it not been so, Pliny would naturally have begun his letter by informing the emperor, that he had met with a certain set of men in the province, called Christians.

Here then is a very singular evidence of the progress of the Christian religion in a short space. It was not fourscore years after the crucifixion of Jesus, when Pliny wrote this letter; nor seventy years since the apostles of Jesus began to mention his name to the Gentile world. Bithynia and Pontus were at a great distance from Judea, the centre from which the religion spread; yet in these provinces, Christianity had long subsisted, and Christians were now in such numbers as to lead the Roman governor to report to the emperor, that they were found not only in cities, but in villages and in open countries; of all ages, of every rank and condition; that they abounded so much, as to have produced a visible desertion of the temples; that beasts brought to market for victims had few purchasers; that the sacred solemnities were much neglected:—circumstances noted by Pliny, for the express purpose of showing to the emperor the effect and prevalency of the new institution.

No evidence remains, by which it can be proved that the Christians were more numerous in Pontus and Bithynia than in other parts of the Roman empire; nor has any reason been offered to show why they should be so. Christianity did not begin in these countries, nor near them. I do not know, therefore, that we ought to confine the description in Pliny's letter to the state of Christianity in those provinces, even if no other account of the same subject had come down to us; but, certainly, this letter may fairly be applied in aid and confirmation of the representations given of the general state of Christianity in the world, by Christian writers of that and the next succeeding age.



Justin Martyr, who wrote about thirty years after Pliny, and one hundred and six after the ascension, has these remarkable words: "There is not a nation, either of Greek or barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wander in tribes, and live in tents, amongst whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the universe by the name of the crucified Jesus."<sup>a</sup> Tertullian, who comes about fifty years after Justin, appeals to the governors of the Roman empire in these terms: "We were but of yesterday, and we have filled your cities, islands, towns, and boroughs, the camp, the senate, and the forum. They (the heathen adversaries of Christianity) lament, that every sex, age, and condition, and persons of every rank also, are converts to that name."<sup>b</sup> I do allow that these expressions are loose, and may be called declamatory. But even declamation hath its bounds; this public boasting, upon a subject which must be known to every reader, was not only useless but unnatural, unless the truth of the case, in a considerable degree, correspond with the description; at least, unless it had been both true and notorious, that great multitudes of Christians, of all ranks and orders, were to be found in most parts of the Roman empire. The same Tertullian, in another passage, by way of setting forth the extensive diffusion of Christianity, enumerates as belonging to Christ, beside many other countries, the "Moors and Gætulians of Africa, the borders of Spain, several nations of France, and parts of Britain, inaccessible to the Romans, the Sarmatians, Daci, Germans, and Scythians;"<sup>c</sup> and, which is more material than the extent of the institution, the *number* of Christians in the several countries in which it prevailed, is thus expressed by him: "Although so great a multitude that in almost every city we form the greater part, we pass our time modestly and in silence."<sup>d</sup> Clemens Alexandrinus, who preceded Tertullian by a few years, introduces a comparison between the success of Christianity, and that of the most celebrated philosophical institutions: "The philosophers were confined to Greece, and to their particular retainers; but the doctrine of the Master of Christianity did not remain in Judea, as philosophy did in Greece, but is spread throughout the whole world, in every nation, and village, and city, both of Greeks and barbarians, converting both whole houses and separate individuals, having already brought over

<sup>a</sup> Dial. cum Tryph.<sup>b</sup> Tertull. Apol. c. 37.<sup>c</sup> Ad Jud. c. 7.<sup>d</sup> Ad Scap. c. 111.

to the truth not a few of the philosophers themselves. If the Greek philosophy be prohibited, it immediately vanishes; whereas, from the first preaching of *our* doctrine, kings and tyrants, governors and presidents, with their whole train, and with the populace on their side, have endeavoured with their whole might to exterminate it, yet doth it flourish more and more.”<sup>a</sup> Origen, who follows Tertullian at the distance of only thirty years, delivers nearly the same account: “In every part of the world,” says he, “throughout all Greece, and in all other nations, there are innumerable and immense multitudes, who, having left the laws of their country, and those whom they esteemed gods, have given themselves up to the law of Moses, and the religion of Christ: and this not without the bitterest resentment from the idolaters, by whom they were frequently put to torture, and sometimes to death: and it is wonderful to observe, how, in so short a time, the religion has increased, amidst punishment and death, and every kind of torture.”<sup>b</sup> In another passage, Origen draws the following candid comparison between the state of Christianity in his time, and the condition of its more primitive ages: “By the good providence of God, the Christian religion has so flourished and increased continually, that it is now preached freely without molestation, although there were a thousand obstacles to the spreading of the doctrine of Jesus in the world. But as it was the will of God that the Gentiles should have the benefit of it, all the counsels of men against the Christians were defeated: and by how much the more emperors and governors of provinces, and the people every where, strove to depress them; so much the more have they increased, and prevailed exceedingly.”<sup>c</sup>

It is well known, that within less than eighty years after this, the Roman empire became Christian under Constantine: and it is probable that Constantine declared himself on the side of the Christians, because they were the powerful party; for Arnobius, who wrote immediately before Constantine’s accession, speaks of “the whole world as filled with Christ’s doctrine, of its diffusion throughout all countries, of an innumerable body of Christians in distant provinces, of the strange revolution of opinion of men of the greatest genius, orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, having come over to the institution, and that also in the face of threats, executions, and tortures.”<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Clem. Al. Strom. lib. vi. ad fin.    <sup>b</sup> Orig. in Cels. lib. i.    <sup>c</sup> Orig. cont. Cels. lib. vii.

<sup>d</sup> Arnob. in Gentes, l. i. p. 27. 9. 24. 42. 44. edit. Lug. Bat. 1650.

And not more than twenty years after Constantine's entire possession of the empire, Julius Firmicus Maternus calls upon the emperors Constantius and Constans to extirpate the relics of the ancient religion; the reduced and fallen condition of which is described by our author in the following words: "Licet adhuc in quibusdam regionibus idololatriæ morientia palpitent membra; tamen in eo res est, ut à Christianis omnibus terris pestiferum hoc malum funditus amputetur:" and in another place, "Modicum tantum superest, ut legibus vestris—extincta idololatriæ pereat funesta contagio."<sup>a</sup> It will not be thought that we quote this writer in order to recommend his temper or his judgement, but to show the comparative state of Christianity and of Heathenism at this period. Fifty years afterwards, Jerome represents the decline of Paganism in language which conveys the same idea of its approaching extinction: "Solitudinem patitur et in urbe gentilitas. Dii quondam nationum, cum bubonibus et noctuis, in solis culminibus remanserunt."<sup>b</sup> Jerome here indulges a triumph, natural and allowable in a zealous friend of the cause, but which could only be suggested to his mind by the consent and universality with which he saw the religion received. "But now," says he, "the passion and resurrection of Christ are celebrated in the discourses and writings of all nations. I need not mention Jews, Greeks, and Latins. The Indians, Persians, Goths, and Egyptians, philosophize, and firmly believe the immortality of the soul, and future recompenses, which, before, the greatest philosophers had denied, or doubted of, or perplexed with their disputes. The fierceness of Thracians and Scythians is now softened by the gentle sound of the Gospel; and every where Christ is all in all."<sup>c</sup> Were therefore the motives of Constantine's conversion ever so problematical, the easy establishment of Christianity, and the ruin of Heathenism under him and his immediate successors, is of itself a proof of the progress which Christianity had made in the preceding period. It may be added also, "that Maxentius, the rival of Constantine, had shown himself friendly to the Christians. Therefore of those who were contending for worldly power and empire, one actually favoured and flattered them, and another may be suspected to have joined himself to them, partly from consideration of interest: so considerable were they become, under external disadvantages of all

<sup>a</sup> De Error. Profan. Relig. c. xxi. p. 172. quoted by Lardner, vol. viii. p. 262.

<sup>b</sup> Jer. ad Lect. ep. 5. 7.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. ep. 8. ad Heliod.



sorts.”<sup>a</sup> This at least is certain, that throughout the whole transaction hitherto, the great seemed to follow, not to lead, the public opinion.

It may help to convey to us some notion of the extent and progress of Christianity, or rather of the character and quality of many early Christians; of their learning and their labours, to notice the number of Christian *writers*, who flourished in these ages. Saint Jerome’s catalogue contains *sixty-six* writers within the first three centuries, and the first six years of the fourth; and *fifty-four* between that time and his own, *viz.* A.D. 392. Jerome introduces his catalogue with the following just remonstrance:—“Let those who say the church has had no philosophers, nor eloquent and learned men, observe who and what they were who founded, established, and adorned it; let them cease to accuse our faith of rusticity, and confess their mistake.”<sup>b</sup> Of these writers, several, as Justin, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Bardesanes, Hippolitus, Eusebius, were voluminous writers. Christian writers abounded particularly about the year 178. Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, founded a library in that city, A.D. 212. Pamphilus, the friend of Origen, founded a library at Cesarea, A.D. 294. Public defences were also set forth, by various advocates of the religion, in the course of its first three centuries. Within one hundred years after Christ’s ascension, Quadratus and Aristides, whose works, except some few fragments of the first, are lost; and, about twenty years afterwards, Justin Martyr, whose works remain, presented apologies for the Christian religion to the Roman emperors; Quadratus and Aristides to Adrian, Justin to Antonius Pius, and a second to Marcus Antoninus. Melito, bishop of Sardis, and Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis, and Miltiades, men of great reputation, did the same to Marcus Antoninus, twenty years afterwards<sup>c</sup>; and ten years after this, Apollonius, who suffered martyrdom under the emperor Commodus, composed an apology for his faith which he read in the senate, and which was afterwards published<sup>d</sup>. Fourteen years after the apology of Apollonius, Tertullian addressed the work which now remains under that name to the governors of provinces in the Roman empire; and, about the same time, Minucius Felix composed a defence of the Christian religion, which

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. vii. p. 380.

<sup>b</sup> Jer. Prol. in Lib. de Ser. Eccl.

<sup>c</sup> Euseb. Hist. lib. iv. c. 26. See also Lardner, vol. ii. p. 666.

<sup>d</sup> Lardner, vol. ii. p. 687.

is still extant ; and, shortly after the conclusion of this century, copious defences of Christianity were published by Arnobius and Lactantius.

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## SECTION II.

### REFLECTIONS UPON THE PRECEDING ACCOUNT.

IN viewing the progress of Christianity, our first attention is due to the number of converts at Jerusalem, immediately after its Founder's death ; because this success was a success at the *time*, and upon the *spot*, when and where the chief part of the history had been transacted.

We are, in the next place, called upon to attend to the early establishment of numerous Christian societies in Judea and Galilee ; which countries had been the scene of Christ's miracles and ministry, and where the memory of what had passed, and the knowledge of what was alleged, must have yet been fresh and certain.

We are, thirdly, invited to recollect the success of the apostles and of their companions, at the several places to which they came, both within and without Judea ; because it was the credit given to original witnesses, appealing for the truth of their accounts to what themselves had seen and heard. The effect also of their preaching strongly confirms the truth of what our history positively and circumstantially relates, that they were able to exhibit to their hearers supernatural attestations of their mission.

We are, lastly, to consider the *subsequent* growth and spread of the religion, of which we receive successive intimations, and satisfactory, though general and occasional, accounts, until its full and final establishment.

In all these several stages, the history is without a parallel : for it must be observed, that we have not now been tracing the progress, and describing the prevalency, of an opinion, founded upon philosophical or critical arguments, upon mere deductions of reason, or the construction of ancient writings ; (of which kind are the several theories which have, at different times, gained possession of the public mind in various departments of science and literature ; and of one or other of which kind are the tenets also which divide the various sects of Christianity ;) but that we speak of a system, the very basis and postulatam of which

was a supernatural character ascribed to a particular person; of a doctrine, the truth whereof depends entirely upon the truth of a matter of fact then recent. "To establish a new religion, even amongst a few people, or in one single nation, is a thing in itself exceedingly difficult. To reform some corruptions which may have spread in a religion, or to make new regulations in it, is not perhaps so hard, when the main and principal part of that religion is preserved entire and unshaken; and yet this very often cannot be accomplished without an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, and may be attempted a thousand times without success. But to introduce a new faith, a new way of thinking and acting, and to persuade many nations to quit the religion in which their ancestors have lived and died, which had been delivered down to them from time immemorial, to make them forsake and despise the deities which they had been accustomed to reverence and worship; this is a work of still greater difficulty."<sup>a</sup> The resistance of education, worldly policy, and superstition, is almost invincible.

If men, in these days, be Christians in consequence of their education, in submission to authority, or in compliance with fashion, let us recollect that the very contrary of this, at the beginning, was the case. The first race of Christians, as well as millions who succeeded them, became such in formal opposition to all these motives, to the whole power and strength of this influence. Every argument, therefore, and every instance, which sets forth the prejudice of education, and the almost irresistible effects of that prejudice, (and no persons are more fond of expatiating upon this subject than deistical writers,) in fact confirms the evidence of Christianity.

But, in order to judge of the argument which is drawn from the early propagation of Christianity, I know no fairer way of proceeding, than to compare what we have seen on the subject, with the success of Christian missions in modern ages. In the East India mission, supported by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, we hear sometimes of thirty, sometimes of forty, being baptized in the course of a year, and these principally children. Of converts properly so called, that is, of adults voluntarily embracing Christianity, the number is extremely small. "Notwithstanding the labour of missionaries for upwards of two hundred years, and the establishments of different Christian nations who support them, there are not

<sup>a</sup> Jortin's Dis. on the Christ. Rel. p. 107. 4th edit.



twelve thousand Indian Christians, and those almost entirely outcasts.”<sup>a</sup>

I lament as much as any man, the little progress which Christianity has made in these countries, and the inconsiderable effect that has followed the labours of its missionaries; but I see in it a strong proof of the Divine origin of the religion. What had the apostles to assist them in propagating Christianity which the missionaries have not? If piety and zeal had been sufficient, I doubt not but that our missionaries possess these qualities in a high degree: for nothing except piety and zeal could engage them in the undertaking. If sanctity of life and manners was the allurements, the conduct of these men is unblameable. If the advantage of education and learning be looked to, there is not one of the modern missionaries, who is not, in this respect, superior to all the apostles: and that not only absolutely, but, what is of more importance, *relatively*, in comparison, that is, with those amongst whom they exercise their office. If the intrinsic excellency of the religion, the perfection of its morality, the purity of its precepts, the eloquence or tenderness or sublimity of various parts of its writings, were the recommendations by which it made its way, these remain the same. If the character and circumstances, under which the preachers were introduced to the countries in which they taught, be accounted of importance, this advantage is all on the side of the modern missionaries. They come from a country and a people to which the Indian world look up with sentiments of deference. The apostles came forth amongst the Gentiles under no other name than that of Jews, which was precisely the character they despised and derided. If it be disgraceful in India to become a Christian, it could not be much less so to be enrolled amongst those, “*quos per flagitia invisos, vulgus, Christianos appellabat.*” If the religion which they had to encounter be considered, the difference, I apprehend, will not be great. The theology of both was nearly the same: “what is supposed to be performed by the power of Jupiter, of Neptune, of Æolus, of Mars, of Venus, according to the mythology of the West, is ascribed, in the East, to the agency of Agrio the god of fire, Varoon the God of oceans, Vayoo the god of wind, Cama the god of love.”<sup>b</sup> The sacred rites of the

<sup>a</sup> Sketches relating to the history, learning, and manners of the Hindoos, p. 48; quoted by Dr. Robertson, *Hist. Dis. concerning ancient India*, p. 236.

<sup>b</sup> Baghyat Geta, p. 94, quoted by Dr. Robertson, *Ind. Dis.* p. 306.

Western Polytheism were gay, festive, and licentious ; the rites of the public religion in the East partake of the same character, with a more avowed indecency. “ In every function performed in the pagodas, as well as in every public procession, it is the office of these women (*i. e.* of women prepared by the Brahmins for the purpose) to dance before the idol, and to sing hymns in his praise ; and it is difficult to say whether they trespass most against decency by the gestures they exhibit, or by the verses which they recite. The walls of the pagodas were covered with paintings in a style no less indelicate.”<sup>a b</sup>

On both sides of the comparison, the popular religion had a strong establishment. In ancient Greece and Rome, it was strictly incorporated with the state. The magistrate was the priest. The highest officers of government bore the most distinguished part in the celebration of the public rites. In India, a powerful and numerous cast possess exclusively the administration of the established worship ; and are, of consequence, devoted to its service, and attached to its interest. In both, the prevailing mythology was destitute of any proper evidence : or rather, in both, the origin of the tradition is run up into ages long anterior to the existence of credible history, or of written language. The Indian chronology computes æras by millions of years, and the life of man by thousands<sup>c</sup> ; and in these, or prior to these, is placed the history of their divinities. In both, the established superstition held the same place in the public opinion ; that is to say, in both it was credited by the bulk of the people<sup>d</sup>, but, by the learned and philosophical part of the

<sup>a</sup> Others of the deities of the East are of an austere and gloomy character, to be propitiated by victims, sometimes by human sacrifices, and by voluntary tortments of the most excruciating kind.

<sup>b</sup> Voyage de Gentil. vol. i. p. 244—260. Preface to Code of Gentoo Laws, p. 57, quoted by Dr. Robertson, p. 320.

<sup>c</sup> “ The Suffec Jogue, or age of purity, is said to have lasted three million two hundred thousand years ; and they hold that the life of man was extended in that age to one hundred thousand years ; but there is a difference amongst the Indian writers of six millions of years in the computation of this æra.” *Ib.*

<sup>d</sup> “ How absurd soever the articles of faith may be, which superstition has adopted, or how unhallowed the rites which it prescribes, the former are received, in every age and country, with unhesitating assent, by the great body of the people, and the latter observed with scrupulous exactness. In our reasonings concerning opinions and practices which differ widely from our own, we are extremely apt to err. Having been instructed ourselves in the principles of a religion, worthy in every respect of that Divine wisdom by which they were dictated, we frequently express wonder at the credulity of nations, in embracing systems of belief which appear to us so directly repugnant to right reason ; and sometimes suspect, that tenets so wild and extravagant do not really gain credit with them. But experience may satisfy us, that neither our wonder nor suspicions are well founded. No article of the public religion was called in question by those people

community, either derided, or regarded by them as only fit to be upholden for the sake of its political uses<sup>a</sup>.

Or if it should be allowed, that the ancient heathens believed in their religion less generally than the present Indians do, I am far from thinking that this circumstance would afford any facility to the work of the apostles, above that of the modern missionaries. To me it appears, and I think it material to be remarked, that a disbelief of the established religion of their country has no tendency to dispose men for the reception of another; but that, on the contrary, it generates a settled contempt of all religious pretensions whatever. General infidelity is the hardest soil which the propagators of a new religion can have to work upon. Could a Methodist or Moravian promise himself a better chance of success, with a French *esprit fort*, who had been accustomed to laugh at the popery of his country, than with a believing Mahometan or Hindoo? Or are our modern unbelievers in Christianity, for that reason, in danger of becoming Mahometans or Hindoos? It does not appear that the Jews, who had a body of historical evidence to offer for their religion, and who at that time undoubtedly entertained and held forth the expectation of a future state, derived any great advantage, as to the extension of their system, from the discredit into which the popular religion had fallen with many of their heathen neighbours.

We have particularly directed our observations to the state and progress of Christianity amongst the inhabitants of *India*: but the history of the Christian mission in other countries, where the efficacy of the mission is left solely to the conviction wrought by the preaching of strangers, presents the same idea, as the Indian mission does, of the feebleness and inadequacy of human means. About twenty-five years ago, was published in England, a translation from the Dutch, of a History of Greenland, and a relation of the mission for above thirty years carried on in that country by the *Unitas Fratrum*, or Moravians. Every

of ancient Europe with whose history we are best acquainted; and no practice which it enjoined appeared improper to them. On the other hand, every opinion that tended to diminish the reverence of men for the gods of their country, or to alienate them from their worship, excited, among the Greeks and Romans, that indignant zeal which is natural to every people attached to their religion by a firm persuasion of its truth." *Ind. Dis.* p. 321.

<sup>a</sup> That the learned Brahmins of the East are rational Theists, and secretly reject the established theory, and condemn the rites that were founded upon them, or rather consider them as contrivances to be supported for their political uses, see Dr. Robertson's *Ind. Dis.* p. 324—334.



part of that relation confirms the opinion we have stated. Nothing could surpass, or hardly equal, the zeal and patience of the missionaries. Yet their historian, in the conclusion of his narrative, could find place for no reflections more encouraging than the following:—"A person that had known the heathen, that had seen the little benefit from the great pains hitherto taken with them, and considered that one after another had abandoned all hopes of the conversion of those infidels; (and some thought they would never be converted, till they saw miracles wrought as in the apostles' days, and this the Greenlanders expected and demanded of their instructors;) one that considered this, I say, would not so much wonder at the past unfruitfulness of these young beginners, as at their stedfast perseverance in the midst of nothing but distress, difficulties, and impediments, internally and externally; and that they never desponded of the conversion of those poor creatures amidst all seeming impossibilities."<sup>a</sup>

From the widely disproportionate effects which attend the preaching of modern missionaries of Christianity, compared with what followed the ministry of Christ and his apostles under circumstances either alike, or not so unlike as to account for the difference, a conclusion is fairly drawn, in support of what our histories deliver concerning them, *viz.* that they possessed means of conviction, which we have not; that they had proofs to appeal to, which we want.

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### SECTION III.

#### OF THE RELIGION OF MAHOMET.

THE only event in the history of the human species, which admits of comparison with the propagation of Christianity, is the success of Mahometanism. The Mahometan institution was rapid in its progress, was recent in its history, and was founded upon a supernatural or prophetic character assumed by its author. In these articles, the resemblance with Christianity is confessed. But there are points of difference, which separate, we apprehend, the two cases entirely.

I. Mahomet did not found his pretensions upon miracles, properly so called; that is, upon proofs of supernatural agency,

<sup>a</sup> History of Greenland, vol. ii. p. 376.

capable of being known and attested by others. Christians are warranted in this assertion by the evidence of the Koran, in which Mahomet not only does not affect the power of working miracles, but expressly disclaims it. The following passages of that book furnish direct proofs of the truth of what we allege:—“The infidels say, Unless a sign be sent down unto him from his lord, we will not believe; thou art a preacher only.”<sup>a</sup> Again; “Nothing hindered us from sending *thee* with miracles, except that the former nations have charged them with imposture.”<sup>b</sup> And lastly; “They say, Unless a sign be sent down unto him from his lord, we will not believe: Answer; Signs are in the power of God alone, and I am no more than a public preacher. Is it not sufficient for them, that we have sent down unto them the book of the Koran to be read unto them?”<sup>c</sup> Beside these acknowledgments, I have observed *thirteen* distinct places, in which Mahomet puts the objection (unless a sign, &c.) into the mouth of the unbeliever, in not one of which does he allege a miracle in reply. His answer is, “that God giveth the power of working miracles, when and to whom he pleaseth;”<sup>d</sup> “that if he should work miracles, they would not believe;”<sup>e</sup> “that they had before rejected Moses, and Jesus, and the Prophets, who wrought miracles;”<sup>f</sup> “that the Koran itself was a miracle.”<sup>g</sup>

The only place in the Koran in which it can be pretended that a sensible miracle is referred to, (for I do not allow the secret visitations of Gabriel, the night-journey of Mahomet to heaven, or the presence in battle of invisible hosts of angels, to deserve the name of *sensible* miracles,) is the beginning of the fifty-fourth chapter. The words are these:—“The hour of judgement approacheth, *and the moon hath been split in sunder*: but if the unbelievers see a sign, they turn aside, saying, This is a powerful charm.” The Mahometan expositors disagree in their interpretation of this passage; some explaining it to be a mention of the splitting of the moon, as one of the future signs of the approach of the day of judgement; others referring it to a miraculous appearance which had then taken place<sup>h</sup>. It seems to me not improbable, that Mahomet might have taken advantage of some extraordinary halo, or other unusual appearance of the moon, which had happened about this time; and which

<sup>a</sup> Sale's Koran, c. xiii. p. 201. ed. quarto.

<sup>c</sup> C. xxix. p. 328.

<sup>f</sup> C. iii. xxi. xxviii.

<sup>d</sup> C. v. x. xiii. twice.

<sup>g</sup> C. xvi.

<sup>b</sup> C. xvii. p. 232.

<sup>e</sup> C. vi.

<sup>h</sup> Vide Sale, in loc.

supplied a foundation both for this passage, and for the story which in after times had been raised out of it.

After this more than silence, after these authentic *confessions* of the Koran, we are not to be moved with miraculous stories related of Mahomet by Abulfeda, who wrote his life about six hundred years after his death; or which are found in the legend of Al-Jannabi, who came two hundred years later\*. On the contrary, from comparing what Mahomet himself wrote and said, with what was afterwards reported of him by his followers, the plain and fair conclusion is, that when the religion was established by conquest, then, and not till then, came out the stories of his miracles.

Now this difference alone constitutes, in my opinion, a bar to all reasoning from one case to the other. The success of a religion founded upon a miraculous history, shows the credit which was given to the history; and this credit, under the circumstances in which it was given, *i. e.* by persons capable of knowing the truth, and interested to inquire after it, is evidence of the reality of the history, and, by consequence, of the truth of the religion. Where a miraculous history is not alleged, no part of this argument can be applied. We admit, that multitudes acknowledged the pretensions of Mahomet: but, these pretensions being destitute of miraculous evidence, we know that the grounds upon which they were acknowledged could not be secure grounds of persuasion to his followers, nor their example any authority to us. Admit the whole of Mahomet's authentic history, so far as it was of a nature capable of being known or witnessed by others, to be true, (which is certainly to admit all that the reception of the religion can be brought to prove,) and Mahomet might still be an impostor, or enthusiast, or a union of both. Admit to be true almost any part of Christ's history, of that, I mean, which was public, and within the cognizance of his followers, and he must have come from God. Where matter of fact is not in question, where miracles are not alleged, I do not see that the progress of a religion is a better argument of its truth, than the prevalency of any system of opinions in natural religion, morality, or physics, is a proof of the truth of those opinions. And we know that this sort of

\* It does not, I think, appear, that these historians had any written accounts to appeal to, more ancient than the *Sonnah*; which was a collection of traditions made by order of the Caliphs two hundred years after Mahomet's death. Mahomet died A.D. 632; Al-Bochari, one of the six doctors who compiled the *Sonnah*, was born A.D. 809; died 869. Prideaux's *Life of Mahomet*, p. 192. ed. 7th.



argument is inadmissible in any branch of philosophy whatever.

But it will be said, if one religion could make its way without miracles, why might not another? To which I reply, first, that this is not the question; the proper question is not, whether a religious institution could be set up without miracles, but whether a religion, or a change of religion, founding itself in miracles, could succeed without any reality to rest upon? I apprehend these two cases to be very different: and I apprehend Mahomet's not taking this course, to be one proof, amongst others, that the thing is difficult, if not impossible, to be accomplished: certainly it was not from an unconsciousness of the value and importance of miraculous evidence; for it is very observable, that in the same volume, and sometimes in the same chapters, in which Mahomet so repeatedly disclaims the power of working miracles himself, he is incessantly referring to the miracles of preceding prophets. One would imagine, to hear some men talk, or to read some books, that the setting up of a religion by dint of miraculous pretences was a thing of every day's experience; whereas, I believe that, except the Jewish and Christian religion, there is no tolerably well authenticated account of any such thing having been accomplished.

II. The establishment of Mahomet's religion was affected by causes which in no degree appertained to the origin of Christianity.

During the first twelve years of his mission, Mahomet had recourse only to persuasion. This is allowed. And there is sufficient reason from the effect to believe that, if he had confined himself to this mode of propagating his religion, we of the present day should never have heard either of him or it. "Three years were silently employed in the conversion of *fourteen* proselytes. For ten years, the religion advanced with a slow and painful progress, within the walls of Mecca. The number of proselytes in the seventh year of his mission may be estimated by the absence of *eighty-three* men and eighteen women, who retired to Æthiopia."<sup>a</sup> Yet this progress, such as it was, appears to have been aided by some very important advantages which Mahomet found in his situation, in his mode of conducting his design, and in his doctrine.

1. Mahomet was the grandson of the most powerful and honourable family in Mecca: and although the early death of his

<sup>a</sup> Gibbon's Hist. vol. ix. p. 244, et seq.; ed. Dub.

father had not left him a patrimony suitable to his birth, he had, long before the commencement of his mission, repaired this deficiency by an opulent marriage. A person considerable by his wealth, of high descent, and nearly allied to the chiefs of his country, taking upon himself the character of a religious teacher, would not fail of attracting attention and followers.

2. Mahomet conducted his design, in the outset especially, with great art and prudence. He conducted it as a politician would conduct a plot. His first application was to his own family. This gained him his wife's uncle, a considerable person in Mecca, together with his cousin Ali, afterwards the celebrated Caliph, then a youth of great expectation, and even already distinguished by his attachment, impetuosity, and courage<sup>a</sup>. He next expressed himself to Abu Bocr, a man amongst the first of the Koreish in wealth and influence. The interest and example of Abu Bocr drew in five other principal persons in Mecca, whose solicitations prevailed upon five more of the same rank. This was the work of three years; during which time, every thing was transacted in secret. Upon the strength of these allies, and under the powerful protection of his family, who, however some of them might disapprove his enterprise, or deride his pretensions, would not suffer the orphan of their house, the relict of their favourite brother, to be insulted; Mahomet now commenced his public preaching. And the advance which he made during the nine or ten remaining years of his peaceable ministry was by no means greater than what, with these advantages, and with the additional and singular circumstance of there being no *established* religion at Mecca at that time to contend with, might reasonably have been expected. How soon his primitive adherents were let into the secret of his views of empire, or in what stage of his undertaking these views first opened themselves to his own mind, it is not now easy to determine. The event however was, that these, his first proselytes, all ultimately attained to riches and honours, to the command of armies, and the government of kingdoms<sup>b</sup>.

3. The Arabs deduced their descent from Abraham through

<sup>a</sup> Of which Mr. Gibbon has preserved the following specimen:—"When Mahomet called out in an assembly of his family, Who among you will be my companion, and my vizir? Ali, then only in the fourteenth year of his age, suddenly replied, O prophet! I am the man;—whosoever rises against thee, I will dash out his teeth, tear out his eyes, break his legs, rip up his belly. O prophet! I will be thy vizir over them." Vol. ix. p. 245.

<sup>b</sup> Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 244.

the line of Ishmaël. The inhabitants of Mecca, in common probably with the other Arabian tribes, acknowledged, as, I think, may clearly be collected from the Koran, one supreme Deity, but had associated with him many objects of idolatrous worship. The great doctrine, with which Mahomet set out, was the strict and exclusive unity of God. Abraham, he told them, their illustrious ancestor; Ishmaël, the father of their nation; Moses, the lawgiver of the Jews; and Jesus, the author of Christianity; had all asserted the same thing; that their followers had universally corrupted the truth, and that *he* was now commissioned to restore it to the world. Was it to be wondered at, that a doctrine so specious, and authorized by names, some or other of which were holden in the highest veneration by every description of his hearers, should, in the hands of a popular missionary, prevail to the extent in which Mahomet succeeded by his pacific ministry?

4. Of the institution which Mahomet joined with this fundamental doctrine, and of the Koran in which that institution is delivered, we discover, I think, two purposes that pervade the whole, *viz.* to make converts, and to make his converts soldiers. The following particulars, amongst others, may be considered as pretty evident indications of these designs:

1. When Mahomet began to preach, his address to the Jews, to the Christians, and to the Pagan Arabs, was, that the religion which he taught was no other than what had been originally their own.—“We believe in God, and that which hath been sent down unto us, and that which hath been sent down unto Abraham, and Ishmaël, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was delivered unto Moses and Jesus, and that which was delivered unto the prophets from their Lord: we make no distinction between any of them.”<sup>a</sup> “He hath ordained you the religion which he commanded Noah, and which we have revealed unto thee, O Mohammed, and which we commanded Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus, saying, Observe this religion, and be not divided therein.”<sup>b</sup> “He hath chosen you, and hath not imposed on you any difficulty in the religion which he hath given you, the religion of your father Abraham.”<sup>c</sup>

2. The author of the Koran never ceases from describing the future anguish of unbelievers, their despair, regret, penitence, and torment. It is the point which he labours above all others. And these descriptions are conceived in terms which will appear

<sup>a</sup> Sale's Koran, c. ii. p. 17.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. c. xlii. p. 393.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. c. xxii. p. 281.



in no small degree impressive even to the modern reader of an English translation. Doubtless they would operate with much greater force upon the minds of those to whom they were immediately directed. The terror which they seem well calculated to inspire, would be to many tempers a powerful application.

3. On the other hand ; his voluptuous paradise ; his robes of silk, his palaces of marble, his rivers, and shades, his groves and couches, his wines, his dainties ; and, above all, his seventy-two virgins assigned to each of the faithful, of resplendent beauty and eternal youth ; intoxicated the imaginations, and seized the passions, of his Eastern followers.

4. But Mahomet's highest heaven was reserved for those who fought his battles, or expended their fortunes in his cause.—“Those believers who sit still at home, not having any hurt, and those who employ their fortunes and their persons for the religion of God, shall not be held equal. God hath preferred those who employ their fortunes and their persons in that cause, to a degree above those who sit at home. God had indeed promised every one Paradise ; but God had preferred those who *fight for the faith* before those who sit still, by adding unto them a great reward ; by degrees of honour conferred upon them from him, and by granting them forgiveness and mercy.”<sup>a</sup> Again ; “Do ye reckon the giving drink to the pilgrims, and the visiting of the holy temple, to be actions as meritorious as those performed by him who believeth in God and the last day, and *fighteth for the religion of God* ? They shall not be held equal with God.—They who have believed and fled their country, and employed their substance and their persons in the defence of God's true religion, shall be in the highest degree of honour with God ; and these are they who shall be happy. The Lord sendeth them good tidings of mercy from him, and good will, and of gardens wherein they shall enjoy lasting pleasures. They shall continue therein for ever ; for with God is a great reward.”<sup>b</sup> And, once more ; “Verily God hath purchased of the true believers their souls and their substance, promising them the enjoyment of Paradise on condition that they *fight for the cause of God* : whether they slay or be slain, the promise for the same is assuredly due by the Law and the Gospel and the Koran.”<sup>c d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Sale's Koran, c. iv. p. 73.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. c. ix. p. 151.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. c. ix. p. 164.

<sup>d</sup> “The sword,” saith Mahomet, “is the key of heaven and of hell ; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months' fasting or prayer. Whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven at the

5. His doctrine of predestination was applicable, and was applied by him, to the same purpose of fortifying and of exalting the courage of his adherents.—“If any thing of the matter had happened unto us, we had not been slain here. Answer; If ye had been in your houses, verily they would have gone forth to fight, whose slaughter was decreed, to the places where they died.”<sup>a</sup>

6. In warm regions, the appetite of the sexes is ardent, the passion for inebriating liquors moderate. In compliance with this distinction, although Mahomet laid a restraint upon the drinking of wine, in the use of women he allowed an almost unbounded indulgence. Four wives, with the liberty of changing them at pleasure<sup>b</sup>, together with the persons of all his captives<sup>c</sup>, was an irresistible bribe to an Arabian warrior. “God is minded,” says he, speaking of this very subject, “to make his religion light unto you; for man was created weak.” How different this from the unaccommodating purity of the Gospel! How would Mahomet have succeeded with the Christian lesson in his mouth,—“Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart?” It must be added, that Mahomet did not venture upon the prohibition of wine, till the fourth year of the Hegira, or the seventeenth of his mission<sup>d</sup>, when his military successes had completely established his authority. The same observation holds of the fast of the Ramadan<sup>e</sup>, and of the most laborious part of his institution, the pilgrimage to Mecca<sup>f</sup>.

What has hitherto been collected from the records of the Mussulman history, relates to the twelve or thirteen years of Mahomet's peaceable preaching; which part alone of his life and enterprise admits of the smallest comparison with the origin of Christianity. A new scene is now unfolded. The city of Medina, distant about ten days' journey from Mecca, was at that time distracted by the hereditary contentions of two hostile tribes. These feuds were exasperated by the mutual persecu-

day of judgement; his wounds shall be resplendent as vermillion, and odoriferous as musk; and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim.” Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 256.

<sup>a</sup> Sale's Koran, c. iii. p. 54.    <sup>b</sup> Ib. c. iv. p. 63.    <sup>c</sup> Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 225.

<sup>d</sup> Mod. Univ. Hist. vol. i. p. 126.    <sup>e</sup> Ib. p. 112.

<sup>f</sup> This latter, however, already prevailed amongst the Arabs, and had grown out of their excessive veneration for the Caaba. Mahomet's law, in this respect, was rather a compliance than an innovation\*.

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\* Sale's Prelim Disc. p. 122.

tions of the Jews and Christians, and of the different Christian sects by which the city was inhabited<sup>a</sup>. The religion of Mahomet presented, in some measure, a point of union or compromise to these divided opinions. It embraced the principles which were common to them all. Each party saw in it an honourable acknowledgement of the fundamental truth of their own system. To the Pagan Arab, somewhat imbued with the sentiments and knowledge of his Jewish or Christian fellow-citizen, it offered no offensive or very improbable theology. This recommendation procured to Mahometanism a more favourable reception at Medina, than its author had been able, by twelve years' painful endeavours, to obtain for it at Mecca. Yet, after all, the progress of the religion was inconsiderable. His missionary could only collect a congregation of forty persons<sup>b</sup>. It was not a religious, but a political association, which ultimately introduced Mahomet into Medina. Harassed, as it should seem, and disgusted by the long continuance of factions and disputes, the inhabitants of that city saw in the admission of the prophet's authority a rest from the miseries which they had suffered, and a suppression of the violence and fury which they had learned to condemn. After an embassy, therefore, composed of believers and unbelievers<sup>c</sup>, and of persons of both tribes, with whom a treaty was concluded of strict alliance and support, Mahomet made his public entry, and was received as the sovereign of Medina.

From this time, or soon after this time, the impostor changed his language and his conduct. Having now a town at his command, where to arm his party, and to head them with security, he enters upon new counsels. He now pretends that a divine commission is given him to attack the infidels, to destroy idolatry, and to set up the true faith by the sword<sup>d</sup>. An early victory over a very superior force, achieved by conduct and bravery, established the renown of his arms, and of his personal character<sup>e</sup>. Every year after this was marked by battles or assassinations. The nature and activity of Mahomet's future exertions may be estimated from the computation, that in the nine following years of his life, he commanded his army in person in eight general engagements<sup>f</sup>, and undertook, by himself or his lieutenants, fifty military enterprises.

From this time we have nothing left to account for, but that

<sup>a</sup> Mod. Univ. Hist. vol. i. p. 100.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. p. 85.

<sup>c</sup> Ib.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. vol. i. p. 88.

<sup>e</sup> Victory of Bedr, ib. p. 106.

<sup>f</sup> Mod. Univ. Hist. vol. i. p. 255.



Mahomet should collect an army, that his army should conquer, and that his religion should proceed together with his conquests. The ordinary experience of human affairs leaves us little to wonder at, in any of these effects: and they were likewise each assisted by peculiar facilities. From all sides, the roving Arabs crowded round the standard of religion and plunder, of freedom and victory, of arms and rapine. Beside the highly painted joys of a carnal paradise, Mahomet rewarded his followers in this world with a liberal division of the spoils, and with the persons of their female captives<sup>a</sup>. The condition of Arabia, occupied by small independent tribes, exposed it to the impression and yielded to the progress, of a firm and resolute army. After the reduction of his native peninsula, the weakness also of the Roman provinces on the north and the west, as well as the distracted state of the Persian empire on the east, facilitated the successful invasion of neighbouring countries. That Mahomet's conquests should carry his religion along with them will excite little surprise, when we know the conditions which he proposed to the vanquished. Death or conversion was the only choice offered to idolaters. "Strike off their heads! strike off all the ends of their fingers<sup>b</sup>! kill the idolaters, wheresoever ye shall find them!"<sup>c</sup> To the Jews and Christians was left the somewhat milder alternative, of subjection and tribute, if they persisted in their own religion, or of an equal participation in the rights and liberties, the honours and privileges, of the faithful, if they embraced the religion of their conquerors. "Ye Christian dogs, you know your option; the Koran, the tribute, or the sword."<sup>d</sup> The corrupted state of Christianity in the seventh century, and the contentions of its sects, unhappily so fell in with men's care of their safety, or their fortunes, as to induce many to forsake its profession. Add to all which, that Mahomet's victories not only operated by the natural effect of conquest, but that they were constantly represented, both to his friends and enemies, as divine declarations in his favour. Success was evidence. Prosperity carried with it, not only influence, but proof. "Ye have already," says he, after the battle of Bedr, "had a miracle shown you, in two armies which attacked each other; one army fought for God's true religion, but the other were infidels."<sup>e</sup> Again; "Ye slew not those who were slain at Bedr, but God

<sup>a</sup> Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 255.    <sup>b</sup> Sale's Koran, c. viii. p. 140.    <sup>c</sup> Ib. c. ix. p. 149.

<sup>d</sup> Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 337.

<sup>e</sup> Sale's Koran, c. iii. p. 36.

slew them.—If ye desire a decision of the matter between us, now hath a decision come unto you.”<sup>a</sup>

Many more passages might be collected out of the Koran to the same effect. But they are unnecessary. The success of Mahometanism during this, and indeed every future period of its history, bears so little resemblance to the early propagation of Christianity, that no inference whatever can justly be drawn from it to the prejudice of the Christian argument. For, what are we comparing? A Galilean peasant accompanied by a few fishermen, with a conqueror at the head of his army. We compare Jesus without force, without power, without support, without one external circumstance of attraction or influence, prevailing against the prejudices, the learning, the hierarchy, of his country; against the ancient religious opinions, the pompous religious rites, the philosophy, the wisdom, the authority, of the Roman empire, in the most polished and enlightened period of its existence; with Mahomet making his way amongst Arabs; collecting followers in the midst of conquests and triumphs, in the darkest ages and countries of the world, and when success in arms not only operated by that command of men’s wills and persons which attend prosperous undertakings, but was considered as a sure testimony of divine approbation. That multitudes, persuaded by this argument, should join the train of a victorious chief; that still greater multitudes should, without any argument, bow down before irresistible power; is a conduct in which we cannot see much to surprise us; in which we can see nothing that resembles the causes by which the establishment of Christianity was effected.

The success, therefore, of Mahometanism, stands not in the way of this important conclusion; that the propagation of Christianity, in the manner and under the circumstances in which it was propagated, is an *unique* in the history of the species. A Jewish peasant overthrew the religion of the world.

I have, nevertheless, placed the prevalency of the religion amongst the auxiliary arguments of its truth; because, whether it had prevailed or not, or whether its prevalency can or cannot be accounted for, the direct argument remains still. It is still true that a great number of men upon the spot, personally connected with the history and with the Author of the religion, were induced by what they heard, and saw, and knew, not only to change their former opinions, but to give up their time, and

<sup>a</sup> Sale’s Koran, c. viii. p. 141.

sacrifice their ease, to traverse seas and kingdoms without rest and without weariness, to commit themselves to extreme dangers, to undertake incessant toils, to undergo grievous sufferings, and all this, solely in consequence, and in support, of their belief of facts, which, if true, establish the truth of the religion, which, if false, they must have known to be so.

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## PART III.

### A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME POPULAR OBJECTIONS.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE SEVERAL GOSPELS.

I KNOW not a more rash or unphilosophical conduct of the understanding, than to reject the substance of a story, by reason of some diversity in the circumstances with which it is related. The usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety. This is what the daily experience of courts of justice teaches. When accounts of a transaction come from the mouths of different witnesses, it is seldom that it is not possible to pick out apparent or real inconsistencies between them. These inconsistencies are studiously displayed by an adverse pleader, but oftentimes with little impression upon the minds of the judges. On the contrary, a close and minute agreement induces the suspicion of confederacy and fraud. When written histories touch upon the same scenes of action, the comparison almost always affords ground for a like reflection. Numerous, and sometimes important, variations present themselves; not seldom also, absolute and final contradictions; yet neither one nor the other are deemed sufficient to shake the credibility of the main fact. The embassy of the Jews to deprecate the execution of Claudian's order to place his statue in their temple, Philo places in harvest, Josephus in seed-time; both contemporary writers. No reader is led by this inconsistency to doubt whether such an embassy was sent, or whether such an order was given. Our own history supplies examples of the same kind. In the account of the Marquis of Argyle's death, in the reign of Charles the Second, we have a very re-



markable contradiction. Lord Clarendon relates that he was condemned to be hanged, which was performed the same day ; on the contrary, Burnet, Woodrow, Heath, Echard, concur in stating that he was beheaded ; and that he was condemned upon the Saturday, and executed upon the Monday<sup>a</sup>. Was any reader of English history ever sceptic enough to raise from hence a question, whether the Marquis of Argyle was executed, or not ? Yet this ought to be left in uncertainty, according to the principles upon which the Christian history has sometimes been attacked. Dr. Middleton contended, that the different hours of the day assigned to the crucifixion of Christ, by John and by the other evangelists, did not admit of the reconciliation which learned men had proposed : and then concludes the discussion with this hard remark ; “ We must be forced, with several of the critics, to leave the difficulty just as we found it, chargeable with all the consequences of manifest inconsistency.”<sup>b</sup> But what are these consequences ? By no means the discrediting of the history as to the principal fact, by a repugnancy (even supposing that repugnancy not to be resolvable into different modes of computation) in the time of the day in which it is said to have taken place.

A great deal of the discrepancy, observable in the Gospels, arises from *omission* ; from a fact or a passage of Christ’s life being noticed by one writer, which is unnoticed by another. Now, omission is at all times a very uncertain ground of objection. We perceive it, not only in the comparison of different writers, but even in the same writer when compared with himself. There are a great many particulars, and some of them of importance, mentioned by Josephus in his Antiquities, which, as we should have supposed, ought to have been put down by him in their place, in the Jewish Wars<sup>c</sup>. Suetonius, Tacitus, Dio Cassius, have, all three, written of the reign of Tiberius. Each has mentioned many things omitted by the rest<sup>d</sup>, yet no objection is from thence taken to the respective credit of their histories. We have in our own times, if there were not something indecorous in the comparison, the life of an eminent person, written by three of his friends, in which there is very great variety in the incidents selected by them ; some apparent, and perhaps some real contradictions ; yet without any impeachment of the substantial truth of their

<sup>a</sup> See Biog. Britann.

<sup>b</sup> Middleton’s Reflections answered by Benson, Hist. Christ. vol. iii. p. 50.

<sup>c</sup> Lardner, part i. vol. ii. p. 735, et seq.

<sup>d</sup> Ibid. p. 743.

accounts, of the authenticity of the books, of the competent information or general fidelity of the writers.

But these discrepancies will be still more numerous, when men do not write histories but *memoirs*: which is perhaps the true name and proper description of our Gospels: that is, when they do not undertake, nor ever meant to deliver, in order of time, a regular and complete account of *all* the things of importance, which the person, who is the subject of their history, did or said; but only, out of many similar ones, to give such passages, or such actions and discourses, as offered themselves more immediately to their attention, came in the way of their inquiries, occurred to their recollection, or were suggested by their *particular design* at the time of writing.

This particular design may appear sometimes, but not always, nor often. Thus I think that the particular design which Saint Matthew had in view whilst he was writing the history of the resurrection, was to attest the faithful performance of Christ's promise to his disciples to go before them into Galilee; because he alone, except Mark, who seems to have taken it from him, has recorded this promise, and he alone has confined his narrative to that single appearance to the disciples which fulfilled it. It was the preconcerted, the great and most public manifestation of our Lord's person. It was the thing which dwelt upon Saint Matthew's mind, and he adapted his narrative to it. But, that there is nothing in Saint Matthew's language, which negatives other appearances, or which imports that this his appearance to his disciples in Galilee, in pursuance of his promise, was his first or only appearance, is made pretty evident by Saint Mark's Gospel, which uses the same terms concerning the appearance in Galilee as Saint Matthew uses, yet itself records two other appearances prior to this: "Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him as he said unto you" (xvi. 7). We might be apt to infer from these words, that this was the *first* time they were to see him: at least, we might infer it, with as much reason as we draw the inference from the same words in Matthew: yet the historian himself did not perceive that he was leading his readers to any such conclusion; for, in the twelfth and two following verses of this chapter, he informs us of two appearances, which, by comparing the order of events, are shown to have been prior to the appearance in Galilee. "He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they



walked, and went into the country : and they went and told it unto the residue, neither believed they them : afterwards he appeared unto the eleven, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief, because they believed not them that had seen him after he was risen."

Probably the same observation, concerning the *particular design* which guided the historian, may be of use in comparing many other passages of the Gospels.

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## CHAPTER II.

### ERRONEOUS OPINIONS IMPUTED TO THE APOSTLES.

A SPECIES of candour which is shown towards every other book, is sometimes refused to the Scriptures ; and that is, the placing of a distinction between judgement and testimony. We do not usually question the credit of a writer, by reason of an opinion he may have delivered upon subjects unconnected with his evidence : and even upon subjects connected with his account, or mixed with it in the same discourse or writing, we naturally separate facts from opinions, testimony from observation, narrative from argument.

To apply this equitable consideration to the Christian records, much controversy and much objection has been raised concerning the quotations of the Old Testament found in the New ; some of which quotations, it is said, are applied in a sense, and to events, apparently different from that which they bear, and from those to which they belong in the original. It is probable to my apprehension, that many of those quotations were intended by the writers of the New Testament as nothing more than *accommodations*. They quoted passages of their Scripture, which suited, and fell in with, the occasion before them, without always undertaking to assert, that the occasion was in the view of the author of the words. Such accommodations of passages from old authors, from books especially which are in every one's hands, are common with writers of all countries ; but in none, perhaps, were more to be expected, than in the writings of the Jews, whose literature was almost entirely confined to their Scriptures. Those prophecies which are alleged with more solemnity, and which are accompanied with a precise declaration, that they originally respected the event



then related, are, I think, truly alleged. But were it otherwise; is the judgement of the writers of the New Testament, in interpreting passages of the Old, or sometimes, perhaps, in receiving established interpretations, so connected either with their veracity, or with their means of information concerning what was passing in their own times, as that a critical mistake, even were it clearly made out, should overthrow their historical credit?—Does it diminish it? Has it any thing to do with it?

Another error imputed to the first Christians, was the expected approach of the day of judgement. I would introduce this objection by a remark upon what appears to me a somewhat similar example. Our Saviour, speaking to Peter of John, said, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?”<sup>a</sup> These words, we find, had been so misconstrued, as that a report from thence “went abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die.” Suppose that this had come down to us amongst the prevailing opinions of the early Christians, and that the particular circumstance, from which the mistake sprang, had been lost, (which, humanly speaking, was most likely to have been the case,) some, at this day, would have been ready to regard and quote the error, as an impeachment of the whole Christian system. Yet with how little justice such a conclusion would have been drawn, or rather such a presumption taken up, the information which we happen to possess enables us now to perceive. To those who think that the Scriptures lead us to believe, that the early Christians, and even the apostles, expected the approach of the day of judgement in their own times, the same reflection will occur, as that which we have made with respect to the more partial, perhaps, and temporary, but still no less ancient, error concerning the duration of Saint John’s life. It was an error, it may be likewise said, which would effectually hinder those who entertained it from acting the part of impostors.

The difficulty which attends the subject of the present chapter, is contained in this question; If we once admit the fallibility of the apostolic judgement, where are we to stop, or in what can we rely upon it? To which question, as arguing with unbelievers, and as arguing for the substantial truth of the Christian history, and for that alone, it is competent to the advocate of Christianity to reply, Give me the apostles’ testi-

<sup>a</sup> John xxi. 22.

mony, and I do not stand in need of their judgement; give me the facts, and I have complete security for every conclusion I want.

But, although I think that it is competent to the Christian apologist to return this answer; I do not think that it is the only answer which the objection is capable of receiving. The two following cautions, founded, I apprehend, in the most reasonable distinctions, will exclude all uncertainty upon this head which can be attended with danger.

First, to separate what was the object of the apostolic mission, and declared by them to be so, from what was extraneous to it, or only incidentally connected with it. Of points clearly extraneous to the religion, nothing need be said. Of points incidentally connected with it, something may be added. Demoniackal possession is one of these points: concerning the reality of which, as this place will not admit the examination, nor even the production of the argument on either side of the question, it would be arrogance in me to deliver any judgement. And it is unnecessary. For what I am concerned to observe is, that even they who think it was a general, but erroneous opinion of those times; and that the writers of the New Testament, in common with other Jewish writers of that age, fell into the manner of speaking and of thinking upon the subject, which then universally prevailed, need not be alarmed by the concession, as though they had any thing to fear from it, for the truth of Christianity. The doctrine was not what Christ brought into the world. It appears in the Christian records, incidentally and accidentally, as being the subsisting opinion of the age and country in which his ministry was exercised. It was no part of the object of *his* revelation, to regulate men's opinions concerning the action of spiritual substances upon animal bodies. At any rate it is unconnected with testimony. If a dumb person was by a word restored to the use of his speech, it signifies little to what cause the dumbness was ascribed; and the like of every other cure wrought upon those who are said to have been possessed. The malady was real, the cure was real, whether the popular explication of the cause was well founded or not. The matter of fact, the change, so far as it was an object of sense, or of testimony, was in either case the same.

Secondly, that, in reading the apostolic writings, we distinguish between their doctrines and their arguments. Their doctrines came to them by revelation properly so called; yet in

propounding these doctrines in their writings or discourses, they were wont to illustrate, support, and enforce them, by such analogies, arguments, and considerations as their own thoughts suggested. Thus the call of the Gentiles, that is, the admission of the Gentiles to the Christian profession without a previous subjection to the law of Moses, was imparted to the apostles by revelation, and was attested by the miracles which attended the Christian ministry among them. The apostles' own assurance of the matter rested upon this foundation. Nevertheless, Saint Paul, when treating of the subject, offers a great variety of topics in its proof and vindication. The doctrine itself must be received: but it is not necessary, in order to defend Christianity, to defend the propriety of every comparison, or the validity of every argument, which the apostle has brought into the discussion. The same observation applies to some other instances; and is, in my opinion, very well founded; "When divine writers argue upon any point, we are always bound to believe the conclusions that their reasonings end in, as parts of divine revelation: but we are not bound to be able to make out, or even to assent to, all the premises made use of by them, in their whole extent, unless it appear plainly, that they affirm the premises as expressly as they do the conclusions proved by them."<sup>a</sup>

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CONNEXION OF CHRISTIANITY WITH THE JEWISH HISTORY.

UNDOUBTEDLY our Saviour assumes the divine origin of the Mosaic institution: and, independently of his authority, I conceive it to be very difficult to assign any other cause for the commencement or existence of that institution; especially for the singular circumstance of the Jews' adhering to the unity, when every other people slid into polytheism; for their being men in religion, children in every thing else; behind other nations in the arts of peace and war, superior to the most improved in their sentiments and doctrines relating to the Deity<sup>b</sup>. Un-

<sup>a</sup> Burnet's Expos. art. 6.

<sup>b</sup> "In the doctrine, for example, of the unity, the eternity, the omnipotence, the omniscience, the omnipresence, the wisdom, and the goodness of God; in their opinions concerning providence, and the creation, preservation, and government, of the world." Campbell on Mir. p. 207. To which we may add, in the acts of their religion not being accompanied either with cruelties or impurities: in the religion itself being free from a species of superstition which prevailed universally



doubtedly, also, our Saviour recognises the prophetic character of many of their ancient writers. So far, therefore, we are bound as Christians to go. But to make Christianity answerable with its life, for the circumstantial truth of each separate passage of the Old Testament, the genuineness of every book, the information, fidelity, and judgement, of every writer in it, is to bring, I will not say great, but unnecessary difficulties, into the whole system. These books were universally read and received by the Jews of our Saviour's time. He and his apostles, in common with all other Jews, referred to them, alluded to them, used them. Yet, except where he expressly ascribes a divine authority to particular predictions, I do not know that we can strictly draw any conclusion from the books being so used and applied, beside the proof, which it unquestionably is, of their notoriety and reception at that time. In this view, our Scriptures afford a valuable testimony to those of the Jews. But the nature of this testimony ought to be understood. It is surely very different from, what it is sometimes represented to be, a specific ratification of each particular fact and opinion; and not only of each particular fact, but of the motives assigned for every action, together with the judgement of praise or dispraise bestowed upon them. Saint James, in his Epistle<sup>a</sup>, says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." Notwithstanding this text, the reality of Job's history, and even the existence of such a person, has been always deemed a fair subject of inquiry and discussion amongst Christian divines. Saint James's authority is considered as good evidence of the existence of the book of Job at that time, and of its reception by the Jews; and of nothing more. Saint Paul, in his Second Epistle to Timothy<sup>b</sup>, has this similitude: "Now, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth." These names are not found in the Old Testament. And it is uncertain whether Saint Paul took them from some apocryphal writing then extant, or from tradition.

in the popular religions of the ancient world, and which is to be found perhaps in all religions that have their origin in human artifice and credulity, *viz.* fanciful connexions between certain appearances and actions, and the destiny of nations or individuals. Upon these conceits rested the whole train of auguries and auspices, which formed so much even of the serious part of the religions of Greece and Rome, and of the charms and incantations which were practised in those countries by the common people. From every thing of this sort the religion of the Jews, and of the Jews alone, was free. Vide Priestley's Lectures on the Truth of the Jewish and Christian Revelation; 1794.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. v. 11.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. iii. 8.

But no one ever imagined that Saint Paul is here asserting the authority of the writing, if it was a written account which he quoted, or making himself answerable for the authenticity of the tradition ; much less, that he so involves himself with either of these questions as that the credit of his own history and mission should depend upon the fact, whether Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, or not. For what reason a more rigorous interpretation should be put upon other references, it is difficult to know. I do not mean, that other passages of the Jewish history stand upon no better evidence than the history of Job, or of Jannes and Jambres ; (I think much otherwise ;) but I mean, that a reference in the New Testament, to a passage in the Old, does not so fix its authority, as to exclude all inquiry into its credibility, or into the separate reasons upon which that credibility is founded ; and that it is an unwarrantable, as well as unsafe rule to lay down concerning the Jewish history, what was never laid down concerning any other, that either every particular of it must be true, or the whole false.

I have thought it necessary to state this point explicitly, because a fashion, revived by Voltaire, and pursued by the disciples of his school, seems to have much prevailed of late, of attacking Christianity through the sides of Judaism. Some objections of this class are founded in misconstruction, some in exaggeration ; but all proceed upon a supposition, which has not been made out by argument, *viz.* that the attestation, which the Author and first teachers of Christianity gave to the divine mission of Moses and the prophets, extends to every point and portion of the Jewish history ; and so extends as to make Christianity responsible in its own credibility, for the circumstantial truth (I had almost said for the critical exactness) of every narrative contained in the Old Testament.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### REJECTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

WE acknowledge that the Christian religion, although it converted great numbers, did not produce an universal, or even a general conviction in the minds of men, of the age and countries in which it appeared. And this want of a more complete and extensive success, is called the rejection of the Christian history

and miracles ; and has been thought by some to form a strong objection to the reality of the facts which the history contains.

The matter of the objection divides itself into two parts ; as it relates to the Jews, and as it relates to Heathen nations : because the minds of these two descriptions of men may have been, with respect to Christianity, under the influence of very different causes. The case of the Jews, inasmuch as our Saviour's ministry was originally addressed to them, offers itself first to our consideration.

Now, upon the subject of the truth of the Christian religion ; with *us*, there is but one question, *viz.* whether the miracles were actually wrought ? From acknowledging the miracles, we pass instantaneously to the acknowledgement of the whole. No doubt lies between the premises and the conclusion. If we believe the works or any one of them, we believe in Jesus. And this order of reasoning is become so universal and familiar, that we do not readily apprehend how it could ever have been otherwise. Yet it appears to me perfectly certain, that the state of thought, in the mind of a Jew of our Saviour's age, was totally different from this. After allowing the reality of the miracle, he had a great deal to do to persuade himself that Jesus was the Messiah. This is clearly intimated by various passages of the Gospel history. It appears, that, in the apprehension of the writers of the New Testament, the miracles did not irresistibly carry, even those who saw them, to the conclusion intended to be drawn from them ; or so compel assent, as to leave no room for suspense, for the exercise of candour, or the effects of prejudice. And to this point, at least, the evangelists may be allowed to be good witnesses ; because it is a point, in which exaggeration or disguise would have been the other way. Their accounts, if they could be suspected of falsehood, would rather have magnified, than diminished, the effects of the miracles.

John vii. 21—31. “ Jesus answered, and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.—If a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken ; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day ? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgement. Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he whom they seek to kill ? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing to him : do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ ?



*Howbeit we know this man, whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.* Then cried Jesus in the temple, as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him, for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. *And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh will he do more miracles than those which this man hath done?*"

This passage is very observable. It exhibits the reasoning of different sorts of persons upon the occasion of a miracle, which persons of all sorts are represented to have acknowledged as real. One sort of men thought, that there was something very extraordinary in all this: but that still Jesus could not be the Christ, because there was a circumstance in his appearance which militated with an opinion concerning Christ, in which they had been brought up, and of the truth of which, it is probable, they had never entertained a particle of doubt, *viz.* that "when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is." Another sort were inclined to believe him to be the Messiah. But even these did not argue as we should; did not consider the miracle as of itself decisive of the question; as what, if once allowed, excluded all further debate upon the subject; but founded their opinion upon a kind of comparative reasoning, "When Christ cometh, will he do *more* miracles than those which this man hath done?"

Another passage in the same evangelist, and observable for the same purpose, is that in which he relates the resurrection of Lazarus; "Jesus," he tells us, (xi. 43, 44,) "when he had thus spoken, cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth: and he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." One might have suspected, that at least all those who stood by the sepulchre, when Lazarus was raised, would have believed in Jesus. Yet the evangelist does not so represent it:—"Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him; but *some of them* went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done." We cannot suppose that the evangelist meant by this account to leave his readers to imagine, that any of the spectators

doubted about the truth of the miracle. Far from it. Unquestionably, he states the miracle to have been fully allowed; yet the persons who allowed it were, according to his representation, capable of retaining hostile sentiments towards Jesus. "Believing in Jesus" was not only to believe that he wrought miracles, but that he was the Messiah. With us, there is no difference between these two things: with them, there was the greatest; and the difference is apparent in this transaction. If Saint John has represented the conduct of the Jews upon this occasion truly, (and why he should not I cannot tell, for it rather makes against him than for him,) it shows clearly the principles upon which their judgement proceeded. Whether he has related the matter truly or not, the relation itself discovers the writer's own opinion of those principles; and that alone possesses considerable authority. In the next chapter, we have a reflection of the evangelist, entirely suited to this state of the case: "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet believed they not on him."<sup>a</sup> The evangelist does not mean to impute the defect of their belief to any doubt about the miracles; but to their not perceiving, what all now sufficiently perceive, and what they would have perceived, had not their understandings been governed by strong prejudices, the infallible attestation which the works of Jesus bore to the truth of his pretensions.

The ninth chapter of Saint John's Gospel contains a very circumstantial account of the cure of a blind man; a miracle submitted to all the scrutiny and examination which a sceptic could propose. If a modern unbeliever had drawn up the interrogatories, they could hardly have been more critical or searching. The account contains also a very curious conference between the Jewish rulers and the patient, in which the point for our present notice is, their resistance of the force of the miracle, and of the conclusion to which it led, after they had failed in discrediting its evidence. "We know that God spake unto Moses: but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is." That was the answer which set their minds at rest. And by the help of much prejudice, and great unwillingness to yield, it might do so. In the mind of the poor man restored to sight, which was under no such bias, and felt no such reluctance, the miracle had its natural operation. "Herein," says he, "is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know, that God heareth not sinners: but

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xii. 37.



if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." We do not find, that the Jewish rulers had any other reply to make to this defence, than that which authority is sometimes apt to make to argument, "Dost thou teach us?"

If it shall be inquired, how a turn of thought, so different from what prevails at present, should obtain currency with the ancient Jews; the answer is found in two opinions which are proved to have subsisted in that age and country. The one was, their expectation of a Messiah of a kind totally contrary to what the appearance of Jesus bespoke him to be; the other, their persuasion of the agency of dæmons in the production of supernatural effects. These opinions are not *supposed* by us for the purpose of argument, but are evidently recognised in the Jewish writings, as well as in ours. And it ought moreover to be considered, that in these opinions the Jews of that age had been from their infancy brought up; that they were opinions, the grounds of which they had probably few of them inquired into, and of the truth of which they entertained no doubt. And I think that these two opinions conjointly afford an explanation of their conduct. The first put them upon seeking out some excuse to themselves for not receiving Jesus in the character in which he claimed to be received; and the second supplied them with just such an excuse as they wanted. Let Jesus work what miracles he would, still the answer was in readiness, "that he wrought them by the assistance of Beelzebub." And to this answer no reply could be made, but that which our Saviour did make, by showing that the tendency of his mission was so adverse to the views with which this being was, by the objectors themselves, supposed to act, that it could not reasonably be supposed that he would assist in carrying it on. The power displayed in the miracles did not alone refute the Jewish solution, because the interposition of invisible agents being once admitted, it is impossible to ascertain the limits by which their efficiency is circumscribed. We of this day may be disposed possibly to think such opinions too absurd to have been ever seriously entertained. I am not bound to contend for the credibility of the opinions. They were at least as reasonable as the belief in witchcraft. They were opinions in which the Jews of that age had from their infancy been instructed; and those who cannot see enough in the force of this reason, to account for their con-



duct towards our Saviour, do not sufficiently consider how such opinions may sometimes become very general in a country, and with what pertinacity, when once become so, they are, for that reason alone, adhered to. In the suspense which these notions, and the prejudices resulting from them, might occasion, the candid and docile and humble-minded would probably decide in Christ's favour; the proud and obstinate, together with the giddy and the thoughtless, almost universally against him.

This state of opinion discovers to us also the reason of what some choose to wonder at, why the Jews should reject miracles when they saw them, yet rely so much upon the tradition of them in their own history. It does not appear, that it had ever entered into the minds of those who lived in the time of Moses and the prophets, to ascribe *their* miracles to the supernatural agency of evil beings. The solution was not then invented. The authority of Moses and the prophets being established, and become the foundation of the national polity and religion, it was not probable that the later Jews, brought up in a reverence for that religion, and the subjects of that polity, should apply to their history a reasoning which tended to overthrow the foundation of both.

II. The infidelity of the Gentile world, and that more especially of men of rank and learning in it, is resolvable into a principle which, in my judgement, will account for the inefficacy of any argument or any evidence whatever, *viz.* contempt prior to examination. The state of religion amongst the Greeks and Romans had a natural tendency to induce this disposition. Dionysius Halicarnassensis remarks, that there were six hundred different kinds of religions or sacred rites exercised at Rome<sup>a</sup>. The superior classes of the community treated them all as fables. Can we wonder, then, that Christianity was included in the number, without inquiry into its separate merits, or the particular grounds of its pretensions? It might be either true or false for any thing they knew about it. The religion had nothing in its character which immediately engaged their notice. It mixed with no politics. It produced no fine writers. It contained no curious speculations. When it did reach their knowledge, I doubt not but that it appeared to them a very strange system,—so unphilosophical,—dealing so little in argument and discussion, in such arguments however and discussions as they were accustomed to entertain. What is said of Jesus Christ, of

<sup>a</sup> Jortin's Remarks on Eccl. Hist. vol. i. p. 371.

his nature, office, and ministry, would be, in the highest degree, alien from the conceptions of their theology. The Redeemer and the destined Judge of the human race, a poor young man, executed at Jerusalem with two thieves upon a cross! Still more would the language in which the Christian doctrine was delivered be dissonant and barbarous to their ears. What knew they of grace, of redemption, of justification, of the blood of Christ shed for the sins of men, of reconciliation, of mediation? Christianity was made up of points they had never thought of; of terms which they had never heard.

It was presented also to the imagination of the learned Heathen under additional disadvantage, by reason of its real, and still more of its nominal, connexion with Judaism. It shared in the obloquy and ridicule, with which that people and their religion were treated by the Greeks and Romans. They regarded Jehovah himself only as the idol of the Jewish nation, and what was related of him, as of a piece with what was told of the tutelar deities of other countries; nay, the Jews were in a particular manner ridiculed for being a credulous race; so that whatever reports of a miraculous nature came out of that country, were looked upon by the Heathen world as false and frivolous. When they heard of Christianity, they heard of it as a quarrel amongst this people, about some articles of their own superstition. Despising, therefore, as they did, the whole system, it was not probable that they would enter, with any degree of seriousness or attention, into the detail of its disputes, or the merits of either side. How little they knew, and with what carelessness they judged, of these matters, appears, I think, pretty plainly from an example of no less weight than that of Tacitus, who in a grave and professed discourse upon the history of the Jews, states that they worshipped the effigy of an ass<sup>a</sup>. The passage is a proof, how prone the learned men of those times were, and upon how little evidence, to heap together stories which might increase the contempt and odium in which that people was holden. The same foolish charge is also confidently repeated by Plutarch<sup>b</sup>.

It is observable, that all these considerations are of a nature to operate with the greatest force upon the highest ranks; upon men of education, and that order of the public from which *writers* are principally taken: I may add also, upon the philosophical as well as the libertine character; upon the

<sup>a</sup> Tacit. Hist. lib. v. c. 2.

<sup>b</sup> Sympos. lib. iv. quæst. 5.



Antonines or Julian, not less than upon Nero or Domitian; and more particularly, upon that large and polished class of men, who acquiesced in the general persuasion, that all they had to do was to practise the duties of morality, and to worship the Deity *more patrio*; a habit of thinking, liberal as it may appear, which shuts the door against every argument for a new religion. The considerations above-mentioned would acquire also strength from the prejudice which men of rank and learning universally entertain against any thing that *originates* with the vulgar and illiterate; which prejudice is known to be as obstinate as any prejudice whatever.

Yet Christianity was still making its way: and, amidst so many impediments to its progress, so much difficulty in procuring audience and attention, its actual success is more to be wondered at, than that it should not have universally conquered scorn and indifference, fixed the levity of a voluptuous age, or, through a cloud of adverse prejudications, opened for itself a passage to the hearts and understandings of the scholars of the age.

And the cause which is here assigned for the rejection of Christianity by men of rank and learning among the Heathens, namely a strong antecedent contempt, accounts also for their *silence* concerning it. If they had rejected it upon examination, they would have written about it; they would have given their reasons. Whereas what men repudiate upon the strength of some prefixed persuasion, or from a settled contempt of the subject, of the persons who propose it, or of the manner in which it is proposed, they do not naturally write books about, or notice much in what they write upon other subjects.

The letters of the Younger Pliny furnish an example of this silence, and let us, in some measure, into the cause of it. From his celebrated correspondence with Trajan, we know that the Christian religion prevailed in a very considerable degree in the province over which he presided; that it had excited his attention; that he had inquired into the matter, just so much as a Roman magistrate might be expected to inquire, *viz.* whether the religion contained any opinions dangerous to government; but that of its doctrines, its evidences, or its books, he had not taken the trouble to inform himself with any degree of care or correctness. But although Pliny had viewed Christianity in a nearer position than most of his learned countrymen saw it in; yet he had regarded the whole with such negligence and dis-



dain, (further than as it seemed to concern his administration,) that, in more than two hundred and forty letters of his which have come down to us, the subject is never once again mentioned. If, out of this number, the two letters between him and Trajan had been lost; with what confidence would the obscurity of the Christian religion have been argued from Pliny's silence about it, and with how little truth!

The name and character which Tacitus has given to Christianity, "*exitiabilis superstitio*," (a pernicious superstition,) and by which two words he disposes of the whole question of the merits or demerits of the religion, afford a strong proof how little he knew, or concerned himself to know, about the matter. I apprehend that I shall not be contradicted, when I take upon me to assert, that no unbeliever of the present age would apply this epithet to the Christianity of the New Testament, or not allow that it was entirely unmerited. Read the instructions given, by a great teacher of the religion, to those very Roman converts, of whom Tacitus speaks; and given also a very few years before the time of which he is speaking; and which are not, let it be observed, a collection of fine sayings brought together from different parts of a large work, but stand in one entire passage of a public letter, without the intermixture of a single thought which is frivolous or exceptionable:—"Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord: rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer: distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord: therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for, in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For

there is no power but of God : the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God : and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same : for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid ; for he beareth not the sword in vain : for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also : for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues : tribute, to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour.

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another ; for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet ; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour ; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand ; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying."<sup>a</sup>

Read this, and then think of "*exitiabilis superstitio!*" Or, if we be not allowed, in contending with Heathen authorities, to produce our books against theirs, we may at least be permitted to confront theirs with one another. Of this "*pernicious superstition,*" what could *Pliny* find to blame, when he was led, by his office, to institute something like an examination into the conduct and principles of the sect? He discovered nothing, but that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves a hymn to

<sup>a</sup> Romans, xii. 9.—xiii. 13.

Christ as a God, and to bind themselves by an oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, but, not to be guilty of theft, robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it.

Upon the words of Tacitus we may build the following observations:

First; That we are well warranted in calling the view under which the learned men of that age beheld Christianity, an obscure and distant view. Had Tacitus known more of Christianity, of its precepts, duties, constitution or design, however he had discredited the story, he would have respected the principle. He would have described the religion differently, though he had rejected it. It has been very satisfactorily shown, that the "superstition" of the Christians consisted in worshipping a person unknown to the Roman calendar; and that the "perniciousness" with which they were reproached, was nothing else but their opposition to the established polytheism; and this view of the matter was just such a one as might be expected to occur to a mind, which held the sect in too much contempt to concern itself about the grounds and reasons of their conduct.

Secondly; We may from hence remark, how little reliance can be placed upon the most acute judgements, in subjects which they are pleased to despise: and which, of course, they from the first consider as unworthy to be inquired into. Had not Christianity survived to tell its own story, it must have gone down to posterity as a "pernicious superstition;" and that upon the credit of Tacitus's account, much, I doubt not, strengthened by the name of the writer, and the reputation of his sagacity.

Thirdly; That this contempt, prior to examination, is an intellectual vice, from which the greatest faculties of mind are not free. I know not, indeed, whether men of the greatest faculties of mind are not the most subject to it. Such men feel themselves seated upon an eminence. Looking down from their height upon the follies of mankind, they behold contending tenets wasting their idle strength upon one another, with the common disdain of the absurdity of them all. This habit of thought, however comfortable to the mind which entertains it, or however natural to great parts, is extremely dangerous; and more apt, than almost any other disposition, to produce



hasty and contemptuous, and, by consequence, erroneous judgements, both of persons and opinions.

Fourthly; We need not be surprised at many writers of that age not mentioning Christianity at all; when they who did mention it, appear to have entirely misconceived its nature and character; and, in consequence of this misconception, to have regarded it with negligence and contempt.

To the knowledge of the greatest part of the learned heathens, the facts of the Christian history could only come by report. The books, probably, they had never looked into. The settled habit of their minds was, and long had been, an indiscriminate rejection of all reports of the kind. With these sweeping conclusions, truth hath no chance. It depends upon distinction. If they would not inquire, how should they be convinced? It might be founded in truth, though they, who made no search, might not discover it.

“Men of rank and fortune, of wit and abilities, are often found, even in Christian countries, to be surprisingly ignorant of religion, and of every thing that relates to it. Such were many of the heathens. Their thoughts were all fixed upon other things; upon reputation and glory, upon wealth and power, upon luxury and pleasure, upon business or learning. They thought, and they had reason to think, that the religion of their country was fable and forgery, a heap of inconsistent lies; which inclined them to suppose that other religions were no better. Hence it came to pass, that when the apostles preached the Gospel, and wrought miracles in confirmation of a doctrine every way worthy of God, many Gentiles knew little or nothing of it, and would not take the least pains to inform themselves about it. This appears plainly from ancient history.”<sup>a</sup>

I think it by no means unreasonable to suppose, that the heathen public, especially that part which is made up of men of rank and education, were divided into two classes; those who despised Christianity beforehand, and those who received it. In correspondency with which division of character, the writers of that age would also be of two classes; those who were silent about Christianity, and those who were Christians. “A good man, who attended sufficiently to the Christian affairs, would become a Christian; after which his testimony ceased to be pagan, and became Christian.”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Jortin's Disc. on the Christ. Rel. p. 66. ed. 4th.

<sup>b</sup> Hartley, Obs. p. 119.

I must also add, that I think it sufficiently proved, that the notion of magic was resorted to by the heathen adversaries of Christianity, in like manner as that of diabolical agency had before been by the Jews. Justin Martyr alleges this as his reason for arguing from prophecy, rather than from miracles. Origen imputes this evasion to Celsus; Jerome to Porphyry; and Lactantius to the heathen in general. The several passages, which contain these testimonies, will be produced in the next chapter. It being difficult, however, to ascertain in what degree this notion prevailed, especially amongst the superior ranks of the heathen communities, another, and I think an adequate, cause has been assigned for their infidelity. It is probable that in many cases the two causes would operate together.

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## CHAPTER V.

THAT THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLES ARE NOT RECITED, OR APPEALED TO, BY EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS THEMSELVES, SO FULLY OR FREQUENTLY AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED.

I SHALL consider this objection, first, as it applies to the letters of the apostles, preserved in the New Testament; and secondly, as it applies to the remaining writings of other early Christians.

The epistles of the apostles are either hortatory or argumentative. So far as they were occupied in delivering lessons of duty, rules of public order, admonitions against certain prevailing corruptions, against vice, or any particular species of it, or in fortifying and encouraging the constancy of the disciples under the trials to which they were exposed, there appears to be no place or occasion for more of these references than we actually find.

So far as the epistles are argumentative, the nature of the argument which they handle, accounts for the infrequency of these allusions. These epistles were not written to prove the truth of Christianity. The subject under consideration was not that which the miracles decided, the reality of our Lord's mission; but it was that which the miracles did not decide, the nature of his person or power, the design of his advent, its effects, and of

those effects the value, kind, and extent. Still I maintain, that miraculous evidence lies at the bottom of the argument. For nothing could be so preposterous as for the disciples of Jesus to dispute amongst themselves, or with others, concerning his office or character, unless they believed that he had shown, by supernatural proofs, that there was something extraordinary in both. Miraculous evidence, therefore, forming not the texture of these arguments, but the ground and substratum, if it be occasionally discerned, if it be incidentally appealed to, it is exactly so much as ought to take place, supposing the history to be true.

As a further answer to the objection, that the apostolic epistles do not contain so frequent, or such direct and circumstantial recitals of miracles as might be expected, I would add, *that the apostolic epistles resemble in this respect the apostolic speeches*, which speeches are given by a writer who distinctly records numerous miracles wrought by these apostles themselves, and by the Founder of the institution in their presence: that it is unwarrantable to contend, that the omission, or infrequency, of such recitals in the speeches of the apostles, negatives the existence of the miracles, when the speeches are given in immediate conjunction with the history of those miracles: and that a conclusion which cannot be inferred from the speeches without contradicting the whole tenour of the book which contains them, cannot be inferred from letters, which in this respect are similar only to the speeches.

To prove the similitude which we allege, it may be remarked, that although in Saint Luke's Gospel the apostle Peter is represented to have been present at many decisive miracles wrought by Christ; and although the second part of the same history ascribes other decisive miracles to Peter himself, particularly the cure of the lame man at the gate of the temple, (Acts iii. 1,) the death of Ananias and Sapphira, (Acts v. 1,) the cure of Æneas,\* (Acts ix. 34,) the resurrection of Dorcas; (Acts ix. 40;) yet out of six speeches of Peter, preserved in the Acts, I know but two in which reference is made to the miracles wrought by Christ, and only one in which he refers to miraculous powers possessed by himself. In his speech upon the day of Pentecost, Peter addresses his audience with great solemnity, thus: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles,



and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:"<sup>a</sup> &c. In his speech upon the conversion of Cornelius, he delivers his testimony to the miracles performed by Christ, in these words: "We are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem."<sup>b</sup> But in this latter speech, no allusion appears to the miracles wrought by himself, notwithstanding that the miracles above enumerated all preceded the time in which it was delivered. In his speech upon the election of Matthias<sup>c</sup>, no distinct reference is made to any of the miracles of Christ's history, except his resurrection. The same also may be observed of his speech upon the cure of the lame man at the gate of the temple<sup>d</sup>; the same in his speech before the Sanhedrim<sup>e</sup>; the same in his second apology in the presence of that assembly. Stephen's long speech contains no reference whatever to miracles, though it be expressly related of him, in the book which preserves the speech, and almost immediately before the speech, "that he did great wonders and miracles among the people."<sup>f</sup> Again, although miracles be expressly attributed to St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, first generally, as at Iconium, (Acts xiv. 3,) during the whole tour through the Upper Asia, (xiv. 27. xv. 12,) at Ephesus; (xix. 11, 12;) secondly, in specific instances, as the blindness of Elymas at Paphos<sup>g</sup>, the cure of the cripple at Lystra<sup>h</sup>, of the pythoness at Philippi<sup>i</sup>, the miraculous liberation from prison in the same city<sup>k</sup>, the restoration of Eutychus<sup>l</sup>, the predictions of his shipwreck<sup>m</sup>, the viper at Melita<sup>n</sup>, the cure of Publius's father<sup>o</sup>; at all which miracles except the first two, the historian himself was present: notwithstanding, I say, this positive ascription of miracles to St. Paul, yet in the speeches delivered by him, and given as delivered by him, in the same book in which the miracles are related, and the miraculous powers asserted, the appeals to his own miracles, or indeed to any miracles at all, are rare and incidental. In his speech at Antioch in Pisidia<sup>p</sup>, there is no allusion but to the resurrection. In his discourse at Miletus<sup>q</sup>, none to any miracle; none in his speech before Felix<sup>r</sup>; none in his speech before Festus<sup>s</sup>; except to Christ's resurrection and his own conversion.

<sup>a</sup> Acts ii. 22.<sup>b</sup> x. 39.<sup>c</sup> i. 15.<sup>d</sup> iii. 12.<sup>e</sup> iv. 8.<sup>f</sup> vi. 8.<sup>g</sup> xiii. 11.<sup>h</sup> xiv. 8.<sup>i</sup> xvi. 16.<sup>k</sup> xvi. 26.<sup>l</sup> xx. 10.<sup>m</sup> xxvii. 1.<sup>n</sup> xxviii. 6.<sup>o</sup> xxviii. 8.<sup>p</sup> xiii. 16.<sup>q</sup> xx. 17.<sup>r</sup> xxiv. 10.<sup>s</sup> xxv. 8.

Agreeably hereunto, in thirteen letters ascribed to Saint Paul, we have incessant references to Christ's resurrection, frequent references to his own conversion, three indubitable references to the miracles which he wrought<sup>a</sup>; four other references to the same, less direct yet highly probable<sup>b</sup>; but more copious or circumstantial recitals we have not. The consent, therefore, between Saint Paul's speeches and letters, is in this respect sufficiently exact: and the reason in both is the same; namely, that the miraculous history was all along *pre-supposed*, and that the question, which occupied the speaker's and the writer's thoughts, was this: whether, allowing the history of Jesus to be true, he was, upon the strength of it, to be received as the promised Messiah; and, if he was, what were the consequences, what was the object and benefit, of his mission?

The general observation which has been made upon the apostolic writings, namely, that the subject of which they treated did not lead them to any direct recital of the Christian history, belongs to the writings of the apostolic fathers. The epistle of Barnabas is, in its subject and general composition, much like the epistle to the Hebrews; an allegorical application of divers passages of the Jewish history, of their law and ritual, to those parts of the Christian dispensation in which the author perceived a resemblance. The epistle of Clement was written for the sole purpose of quieting certain dissensions that had arisen amongst the members of the church of Corinth, and of reviving in their minds that temper and spirit of which their predecessors in the Gospel had left them an example. The work of Hermas is a vision: quotes neither the Old Testament nor the New; and merely falls now and then into the language, and the mode of speech, which the author had read in our Gospels. The epistles of Polycarp and Ignatius had for their principal object the order and discipline of the churches which they addressed. Yet, under all these circumstances of disadvantage, the great points of the Christian history are fully recognised. This hath been shown in its proper place<sup>c</sup>.

There is, however, another class of writers, to whom the answer above given, *viz.* the unsuitableness of any such appeals or references as the objection demands, to the subjects of which the writings treated, does not apply; and that is, the class of

<sup>a</sup> Gal. iii. 5; Rom. xv. 18, 19; 2 Cor. xii. 12.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5; Eph. iii. 7; Gal. ii. 8; 1 Thess. i. 8.

<sup>c</sup> Vide *suprà*, p. 48—51.

ancient *apologists*, whose declared design it was to defend Christianity, and to give the reasons of their adherence to it. It is necessary, therefore, to inquire how the matter of the objection stands in these.

The most ancient apologist, of whose works we have the smallest knowledge, is Quadratus. Quadratus lived about seventy years after the ascension, and presented his apology to the emperor Adrian. From a passage of this work, preserved in Eusebius, it appears that the author did directly and formally appeal to the miracles of Christ, and in terms as express and confident as we could desire. The passage (which has been once already stated) is as follows: "The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real; both they that were healed, and they that were raised from the dead, were seen, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards: not only whilst he dwelled on this earth, but also after his departure, and for a good while after it; insomuch as that some of them have reached to our times."<sup>a</sup> Nothing can be more rational or satisfactory than this.

Justin Martyr, the next of the Christian apologists whose work is not lost, and who followed Quadratus at the distance of about thirty years, has touched upon passages of Christ's history in so many places, that a tolerably complete account of Christ's life might be collected out of his works. In the following quotation, he asserts the performance of miracles by Christ, in words as strong and positive as the language possesses: "Christ healed those who from their birth were blind, and deaf, and lame; causing, by his word, one to leap, another to hear, and a third to see: and having raised the dead, and caused them to live, he, by his works, excited attention, and induced the men of that age to know him. Who, however, seeing these things done, said that it was a magical appearance, and dared to call him a magician, and a deceiver of the people."<sup>b</sup>

In his first apology<sup>c</sup>, Justin expressly assigns the reason for his having recourse to the argument from prophecy, rather than alleging the miracles of the Christian history: which reason was, that the persons with whom he contended would ascribe these miracles to magic; "lest any of our opponents should say, What hinders, but that he who is called Christ by us, being a man sprung from men, performed the miracles which we

<sup>a</sup> Euseb. Hist. l. iv. c. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Just. Dial. p. 258, ed. Thirlby.

<sup>c</sup> Apolog. prim. p. 48, ib.



attribute to him by magical art?" The suggestion of this reason meets, as I apprehend, the very point of the present objection; more especially when we find Justin followed in it by other writers of that age. Irenæus, who came about forty years after him, notices the same evasion in the adversaries of Christianity, and replies to it by the same argument: "But, if they shall say, that the Lord performed these things by an illusory appearance (*φαντασιωδῶς*) leading these objectors to the prophecies, we will show from them, that all things were thus predicted concerning him, and strictly came to pass."<sup>a</sup> Lactantius, who lived a century lower, delivers the same sentiment upon the same occasion: "He performed miracles;—we might have supposed him to have been a magician, as ye say, and as the Jews then supposed, if all the prophets had not with one spirit foretold that Christ should perform these very things."<sup>b</sup>

But to return to the Christian apologists in their order. Tertullian:—"That person whom the Jews had vainly imagined, from the meanness of his appearance, to be a mere man, they afterwards, in consequence of the power he exerted, considered as a magician, when he, with one word, ejected devils out of the bodies of men, gave sight to the blind, cleansed the leprous, strengthened the nerves of those that had the palsy, and lastly, with one command restored the dead to life; when he, I say, made the very elements obey him, assuaged the storms, walked upon the seas, demonstrating himself to be the Word of God."<sup>c</sup>

Next in the catalogue of professed apologists we may place Origen, who, it is well known, published a formal defence of Christianity, in answer to Celsus, a heathen, who had written a discourse against it. I know no expressions, by which a plainer or more positive appeal to the Christian miracles can be made, than the expressions used by Origen; "Undoubtedly we do think him to be the Christ, and the Son of God, because he healed the lame and the blind; and we are the more confirmed in this persuasion, by what is written in the prophecies: 'Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall hear, and the lame man shall leap as a hart.' But that he also raised the dead, and that it is not a fiction of those who wrote the Gospels, is evident from hence, that, if it had been a fiction, there would have been many recorded to be raised up,

<sup>a</sup> Iren. l. ii. c. 57.

<sup>b</sup> Lactant. v. 3.

<sup>c</sup> Tertull. Apolog. p. 20; ed. Priorii, Par. 1675.

and such as had been a long time in their graves. But, it not being a fiction, few have been recorded: for instance, the daughter of the ruler of a synagogue, of whom I do not know why he said, She is not dead but sleepeth, expressing something peculiar to her, not common to all dead persons: and the only son of a widow, on whom he had compassion, and raised him to life, after he had bid the bearers of the corpse to stop; and the third, Lazarus, who had been buried four days." This is positively to assert the miracles of Christ, and it is also to comment upon them, and that with a considerable degree of accuracy and candour.

In another passage of the same author, we meet with the old solution of magic applied to the miracles of Christ by the adversaries of the religion. "Celsus," saith Origen, "well knowing what great works may be alleged to have been done by Jesus, pretends to grant that the things related of him are true; such as healing diseases, raising the dead, feeding multitudes with a few loaves, of which large fragments were left."<sup>a</sup> And then Celsus gives, it seems, an answer to these proofs of our Lord's mission, which, as Origen understood it, resolved the phænomena into magic; for, Origen begins his reply by observing, "You see that Celsus in a manner allows that there is such a thing as magic."<sup>b</sup>

It appears also from the testimony of St. Jerome, that Porphyry, the most learned and able of the heathen writers against Christianity, resorted to the same solution: "Unless," says he, speaking to Vigilantius, "according to the manner of the Gentiles and the profane, of *Porphyry* and Eunomius, you pretend that these are the tricks of dæmons."<sup>c</sup>

This magic, these dæmons, this illusory appearance, this comparison with the tricks of jugglers, by which many of that age accounted so easily for the Christian miracles, and which answers the advocates of Christianity often thought it necessary to refute by arguments drawn from other topics, and particularly from prophecy, (to which, it seems, these solutions did not apply,) we now perceive to be gross subterfuges. That such reasons were ever seriously urged, and seriously received, is only a proof, what a gloss and varnish fashion can give to any opinion.

It appears, therefore, that the miracles of Christ, understood,

<sup>a</sup> Orig. cont. Cels. lib. ii. sect. 48.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner's Jewish and Heath. Test. vol. ii. p. 294, ed. 4to.

<sup>c</sup> Jerome cont. Vigil.

as we understand them, in their literal and historical sense, were positively and precisely asserted and appealed to by the apologists for Christianity; which answers the allegation of the objection.

I am ready, however, to admit, that the ancient Christian advocates did not insist upon the miracles in argument, so frequently as I should have done. It was their lot to contend with notions of magical agency, against which the mere production of the facts was not sufficient for the convincing of their adversaries: I do not know whether they themselves thought it quite decisive of the controversy. But since it is proved, I conceive with certainty, that the sparingness with which they appealed to miracles was owing neither to their ignorance, nor their doubt of the facts, it is, at any rate, an objection, not to the truth of the history, but to the judgement of its defenders.

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## CHAPTER VI.

WANT OF UNIVERSALITY IN THE KNOWLEDGE AND RECEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY, AND OF GREATER CLEARNESS IN THE EVIDENCE.

OF a revelation which really came from God, the proof, it has been said, would in all ages be so public and manifest, that no part of the human species would remain ignorant of it, no understanding could fail of being convinced by it.

The advocates of Christianity do not pretend that the evidence of their religion possesses these qualities. They do not deny that we can conceive it to be within the compass of divine power, to have communicated to the world a higher degree of assurance, and to have given to his communication a stronger and more extensive influence. For any thing we are able to discern, God *could* have so formed men, as to have perceived the truths of religion intuitively; or to have carried on a communication with the other world, whilst they lived in this; or to have seen the individuals of the species, instead of dying, pass to heaven by a sensible translation. He could have presented a separate miracle to each man's senses. He could have established a standing miracle. He could have caused miracles to be wrought in every different age and country. These and many more methods, which we may imagine, if we once give



loose to our imaginations, are, so far as we can judge, all practicable.

The question, therefore, is, not whether Christianity possesses the highest possible degree of evidence, but whether the not having more evidence be a sufficient reason for rejecting that which we have.

Now there appears to be no fairer method of judging concerning any dispensation which is alleged to come from God, when a question is made whether such a dispensation could come from God or not, than by comparing it with other things which are acknowledged to proceed from the same counsel, and to be produced by the same agency. If the dispensation in question labour under no defects but what apparently belong to other dispensations, these seeming defects do not justify us in setting aside the proofs which are offered of its authenticity, if they be otherwise entitled to credit.

Throughout that order then of nature, of which God is the author, what we find is a system of *beneficence*: we are seldom or never able to make out a system of *optimism*. I mean, that there are few cases in which, if we permit ourselves to range in possibilities, we cannot suppose something more perfect, and more unobjectionable, than what we see. The rain which descends from heaven, is confessedly amongst the contrivances of the Creator, for the sustentation of the animals and vegetables which subsist upon the surface of the earth. Yet how partially and irregularly is it supplied! How much of it falls upon the sea, where it can be of no use! how often is it wanted where it would be of the greatest! What tracts of continent are rendered deserts by the scarcity of it! Or, not to speak of extreme cases, how much sometimes do inhabited countries suffer by its deficiency or delay!—We could imagine, if to imagine were our business, the matter to be otherwise regulated. We could imagine showers to fall just where and when they would do good; always seasonable, every where sufficient; so distributed as not to leave a field upon the face of the globe scorched by drought, or even a plant withering for the lack of moisture. Yet, does the difference between the real case and the imagined case, or the seeming inferiority of the one to the other, authorize us to say, that the present disposition of the atmosphere is not amongst the productions or the designs of the Deity? Does it check the inference which we draw from the confessed beneficence of the provision? or does it make us cease to admire the contrivance?

The observation, which we have exemplified in the single instance of the rain of heaven, may be repeated concerning most of the phænomena of nature ; and the true conclusion to which it leads is this ; that to inquire what the Deity might have done, could have done, or, as we even sometimes presume to speak, ought to have done, or, in hypothetical cases, would have done, and to build any propositions upon such inquiries against evidence of facts, is wholly unwarrantable. It is a mode of reasoning which will not do in natural history, which will not do in natural religion, which cannot therefore be applied with safety to revelation. It may have some foundation, in certain speculative *à priori* ideas of the divine attributes ; but it has none in experience, or in analogy. The general character of the works of nature is, on the one hand, goodness both in design and effect ; and, on the other hand, a liability to difficulty, and to objections, if such objections be allowed, by reason of seeming incompleteness or uncertainty in attaining their end. Christianity participates of this character. The true similitude between nature and revelation consists in this ; that they each bear strong marks of their original ; that they each also bear appearances of irregularity and defect. A system of strict optimism may, nevertheless, be the real system in both cases. But what I contend is, that the proof is hidden from *us* ; that we ought not to expect to perceive *that* in revelation, which we hardly perceive in any thing ; that beneficence, of which we *can* judge, ought to satisfy us, that optimism, of which we *cannot* judge, ought not to be sought after. We can judge of beneficence, because it depends upon effects which we experience, and upon the relation between the means which we see acting, and the ends which we see produced. We cannot judge of optimism, because it necessarily implies a comparison of that which is tried, with that which is not tried ; of consequences which we see, with others which we imagine, and concerning many of which, it is more than probable, we know nothing ; concerning some, that we have no notion.

If Christianity be compared with the state and progress of natural religion, the argument of the objector will gain nothing by the comparison. I remember hearing an unbeliever say, that, if God had given a revelation, he would have written it in the skies. Are the truths of natural religion written in the skies, or in a language which every one reads ? or is this the case with the most useful arts, or the most necessary sciences of human

life? An Otaheitean or an Esquimaux knows nothing of Christianity; does he know more of the principles of deism or morality? which, notwithstanding his ignorance, are neither untrue, nor unimportant, nor uncertain. The existence of the Deity is left to be collected from observations, which every man does not make, which every man, perhaps, is not capable of making. Can it be argued, that God does not exist, because, if he did, he would let us see him, or discover himself to mankind by proofs, (such as, we may think, the nature of the subject merited,) which no inadvertency could miss, no prejudice withstand?

If Christianity be regarded as a providential instrument for the melioration of mankind, its progress and diffusion resembles that of other causes by which human life is improved. The diversity is not greater, nor the advance more slow, in religion, than we find it to be in learning, liberty, government, laws. The Deity hath not touched the order of nature in vain. The Jewish religion produced great and permanent effects; the Christian religion hath done the same. It hath disposed the world to amendment. It hath put things in a train. It is by no means improbable that it may become universal: and that the world may continue in that stage so long as that the duration of its reign may bear a vast proportion to the time of its partial influence.

When we argue concerning Christianity, that it must necessarily be true, because it is beneficial, we go, perhaps, too far on one side; and we certainly go too far on the other, when we conclude that it must be false, because it is not so efficacious as we could have supposed. The question of its truth is to be tried upon its proper evidence, without deferring much to this sort of argument, on either side. "The evidence," as Bishop Butler hath rightly observed, "depends upon the judgement we form of human conduct, under given circumstances, of which it may be presumed that we know something; the objection stands upon the supposed conduct of the Deity, under relations with which we are not acquainted."

What would be the real effect of that overpowering evidence which our adversaries require in a revelation, it is difficult to foretell; at least, we must speak of it as of a dispensation of which we have no experience. Some consequences, however, would, it is probable, attend this œconomy, which do not seem to befit a revelation that proceeded from God. One is, that irre-



sistible proof would restrain the voluntary powers too much ; would not answer the purpose of trial and probation ; would call for no exercise of candour, seriousness, humility, inquiry ; no submission of passion, interests, and prejudices, to moral evidence and to probable truth ; no habits of reflection ; none of that previous desire to learn and to obey the will of God, which forms perhaps the test of the virtuous principle, and which induces men to attend, with care and reverence, to every credible intimation of that will, and to resign present advantages and present pleasures to every reasonable expectation of propitiating his favour. “ Men’s moral probation may be, whether they will take due care to inform themselves by impartial consideration ; and, afterwards, whether they will act as the case requires, upon the evidence which they have. And this we find by experience is often our probation in our temporal capacity.”<sup>a</sup>

II. These modes of communication would leave no place for the admission of *internal evidence* ; which ought, perhaps, to bear a considerable part in the proof of every revelation, because it is a species of evidence which applies itself to the knowledge, love, and practice, of virtue, and which operates in proportion to the degree of those qualities which it finds in the person whom it addresses. Men of good dispositions, amongst Christians, are greatly affected by the impression which the Scriptures themselves make upon their minds. Their conviction is much strengthened by these impressions. And this perhaps was intended to be one effect to be produced by the religion. It is likewise true, to whatever cause we ascribe it (for I am not in this work at liberty to introduce the Christian doctrine of grace or assistance, or the Christian promise, that, “ if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God”<sup>b</sup>),—it is true, I say, that they who sincerely act, or sincerely endeavour to act, *according* to what they believe, that is, according to the just result of the probabilities, or, if you please, the possibilities, in natural and revealed religion, which they themselves perceive, and according to a rational estimate of consequences, and, above all, according to the just effect of those principles of gratitude and devotion, which even the view of nature generates in a well-ordered mind, *seldom fail of proceeding farther*. This also may have been exactly what was designed.

Whereas, may it not be said that irresistible evidence would

<sup>a</sup> Butler’s Analogy, part ii. c. vi.

<sup>b</sup> John vii. 17.

confound all characters and all dispositions? would subvert, rather than promote, the true purpose of the divine counsels; which is, not to produce *obedience* by a force little short of mechanical constraint, (which obedience would be regularity, not virtue, and would hardly perhaps differ from that which inanimate bodies pay to the laws impressed upon their nature,) but to treat moral agents agreeably to what they are; which is done, when light and motives are of such kinds, and are imparted in such measures, that the influence of them depends upon the recipients themselves? "It is not meet to govern rational free agents *in viâ* by sight and sense. It would be no trial or thanks to the most sensual wretch to forbear sinning, if heaven and hell were open to his sight. That spiritual vision and fruition is our state *in patriâ*." (Baxter's Reasons, p. 357.) There may be truth in this thought, though roughly expressed. Few things are more improbable than that we (the human species) should be the highest order of beings in the universe: that animated nature should ascend from the lowest reptile to us, and all at once stop there. If there be classes above us of rational intelligences, clearer manifestations may belong to them. This may be one of the distinctions. And it may be one, to which we ourselves hereafter shall attain.

III. But may it not also be asked, whether the perfect display of a future state of existence would be compatible with the activity of civil life, and with the success of human affairs? I can easily conceive that this impression may be overdone; that it may so seize and fill the thoughts, as to leave no place for the cares and offices of men's several stations, no anxiety for worldly prosperity, or even for a worldly provision, and, by consequence, no sufficient stimulus to secular industry. Of the first Christians we read, "that all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need; and, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."<sup>a</sup> This was extremely natural, and just what might be expected from miraculous evidence coming with full force upon the senses of mankind: but I much doubt whether, if this state of mind had been universal, or long-continued, the business of the world could have gone on. The necessary arts of social life would have been little cultivated. The plough and

<sup>a</sup> Acts ii. 44—46.

the loom would have stood still. Agriculture, manufactures, trade, and navigation, would not, I think, have flourished, if they could have been exercised at all. Men would have addicted themselves to contemplative and ascetic lives, instead of lives of business and of useful industry. We observe that Saint Paul found it necessary frequently to recall his converts to the ordinary labours and domestic duties of their condition ; and to give them, in his own example, a lesson of contented application to their worldly employments.

By the manner in which the religion is now proposed, a great portion of the human species is enabled, and of these multitudes of every generation are induced, to seek and to effectuate their salvation, through the medium of Christianity, without interruption of the prosperity or of the regular course of human affairs.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SUPPOSED EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY.

THAT a religion, which, under every form in which it is taught, holds forth the final reward of virtue and punishment of vice, and proposes those distinctions of virtue and vice, which the wisest and most cultivated part of mankind confess to be just, should not be believed, is very possible ; but that, so far as it is believed, it should not produce any good, but rather a bad effect upon public happiness, is a proposition which it requires very strong evidence to render credible. Yet many have been found to contend for this paradox, and very confident appeals have been made to history, and to observation, for the truth of it.

In the conclusions, however, which these writers draw from what they call experience, two sources, I think, of mistake, may be perceived.

One is, that they look for the influence of religion in the wrong place.

The other, that they charge Christianity with many consequences, for which it is not responsible.

I. The influence of religion is not to be sought for in the councils of princes, in the debates or resolutions of popular as-



semblies, in the conduct of governments towards their subjects, or of states and sovereigns towards one another : of conquerors at the head of their armies, or of parties intriguing for power at home ; (topics which alone almost occupy the attention, and fill the pages of history ;) but must be perceived, if perceived at all, in the silent course of private and domestic life. Nay more ; even *there* its influence may not be very obvious to observation. If it check, in some degree, personal dissoluteness, if it beget a general probity in the transaction of business, if it produce soft and humane manners in the mass of the community, and occasional exertions of laborious or expensive benevolence in a few individuals, it is all the effect which can offer itself to external notice. The kingdom of heaven is within us. That which is the substance of the religion, its hopes and consolation, its intermixture with the thoughts by day and by night, the devotion of the heart, the control of appetite, the steady direction of the will to the commands of God, is necessarily invisible. Yet upon these depend the virtue and the happiness of millions. This cause renders the representations of history, with respect to religion, defective and fallacious, in a greater degree than they are upon any other subject. Religion operates most upon those of whom history knows the least ; upon fathers and mothers in their families, upon men-servants and maid-servants, upon the orderly tradesman, the quiet villager, the manufacturer at his loom, the husbandman in his fields. Amongst such, its influence collectively may be of inestimable value, yet its effects, in the mean time, little upon those who figure upon the stage of the world. *They* may know nothing of it ; they may believe nothing of it ; they may be actuated by motives more impetuous than those which religion is able to excite. It cannot, therefore, be thought strange, that this influence should elude the grasp and touch of public history : for, what is public history, but a register of the successes and disappointments, the vices, the follies, and the quarrels, of those who engage in contentions for power ?

I will add, that much of this influence may be felt in times of public distress, and little of it in times of public wealth and security. This also increases the uncertainty of any opinions that we draw from historical representations. The influence of Christianity is commensurate with no effects which history states. We do not pretend that it has any such necessary and irresistible power

over the affairs of nations, as to surmount the force of other causes.

The Christian religion also acts upon public usages and institutions, by an operation which is only secondary and indirect. Christianity is not a code of civil law. It can only reach public institutions through private character. Now its influence upon private character may be considerable, yet many public usages and institutions repugnant to its principles may remain. To get rid of these, the reigning part of the community must act, and act together. But it may be long before the persons who compose this body be sufficiently touched with the Christian character, to join in the suppression of practices, to which they and the public have been reconciled by causes which will reconcile the human mind to any thing, by habit and interest. Nevertheless, the effects of Christianity, even in this view, have been important. It has mitigated the conduct of war, and the treatment of captives. It has softened the administration of despotic, or of nominally despotic governments. It has abolished polygamy. It has restrained the licentiousness of divorces. It has put an end to the exposure of children, and the immolation of slaves. It has suppressed the combats of gladiators <sup>a</sup>, and the impurities of religious rites. It has banished, if not unnatural vices, at least the toleration of them. It has greatly meliorated the condition of the laborious part, that is to say, of the mass of every community, by procuring for them a day of weekly rest. In all countries, in which it is professed, it has produced numerous establishments for the relief of sickness and poverty; and, in some, a regular and general provision by law. It has triumphed over the slavery established in the Roman empire: it is contending, and, I trust, will one day prevail, against the worse slavery of the West Indies.

A Christian writer <sup>b</sup>, so early as in the second century, has testified the resistance which Christianity made to wicked and licentious practices though established by law and by public usage:—"Neither in Parthia do the Christians, though Parthians, use polygamy; nor in Persia, though Persians, do they marry their own daughters; nor among the Bactri, or Galli, do they violate the sanctity of marriage; nor wherever they are, do they suffer themselves to be overcome by ill-constituted laws and manners."

<sup>a</sup> Lipsius affirms (Sat. b. i. c. 12) that the gladiatorial shows sometimes cost Europe twenty or thirty thousand lives in a month; and that not only the men, but even the women of all ranks, were passionately fond of these shows.

See Bishop Porteus, Sermon XIII.

<sup>b</sup> Bardesanes, ap. Euseb. Præp. Evang. vi. 10.

Socrates did not destroy the idolatry of Athens, or produce the slightest revolution in the manners of his country.

But the argument to which I recur is, that the benefit of religion, being felt chiefly in the obscurity of private stations, necessarily escapes the observation of history. From the first general notification of Christianity to the present day, there have been in every age many millions, whose names were never heard of, made better by it, not only in their conduct, but in their disposition; and happier, not so much in their external circumstances, as in that which is *inter præcordia*, in that which alone deserves the name of happiness, the tranquillity and consolation of their thoughts. It has been, since its commencement, the author of happiness and virtue to millions and millions of the human race. Who is there that would not wish his son to be a Christian?

Christianity also, in every country in which it is professed, hath obtained a sensible, although not a complete influence, upon the public judgement of morals. And this is very important. For without the occasional correction which public opinion receives, by referring to some fixed standard of morality, no man can foretel into what extravagances it might wander. Assassination might become as honourable as duelling: unnatural crimes be accounted as venal as fornication is wont to be accounted. In this way it is possible, that many may be kept in order by Christianity, who are not themselves Christians. They may be guided by the rectitude which it communicates to public opinion. Their consciences may suggest their duty truly, and they may ascribe these suggestions to a moral sense, or to the native capacity of the human intellect, when in fact they are nothing more than the public opinion, reflected from their own minds; and opinion, in a considerable degree, modified by the lessons of Christianity. "Certain it is, and this is a great deal to say, that the generality, even of the meanest and most vulgar and ignorant people, have truer and worthier notions of God, more just and right apprehensions concerning his attributes and perfections, a deeper sense of the difference of good and evil, a greater regard to moral obligations, and to the plain and most necessary duties of life, and a more firm and universal expectation of a future state of rewards and punishments, than, in any heathen country, any considerable number of men were found to have had."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Clarke, *Ev. Nat. Rel.* p. 206, ed. v.



After all, the value of Christianity is not to be appreciated by its *temporal* effects. The object of revelation is to influence human conduct in this life ; but what is gained to happiness by that influence can only be estimated by taking in the whole of human existence. Then, as hath already been observed, there may be also great consequences of Christianity, which do not belong to it as a revelation. The effects upon human salvation, of the mission, of the death, of the present, of the future agency of Christ may be universal, though the religion be not universally known.

Secondly, I assert that Christianity is charged with many consequences for which it is not responsible. I believe that religious motives have had no more to do in the formation of nine tenths of the intolerant and persecuting laws, which in different countries have been established upon the subject of religion, than they have had to do in England with the making of the game laws. These measures, although they have the Christian religion for their subject, are resolvable into a principle which Christianity certainly did not plant, (and which Christianity could not universally condemn, because it is not universally wrong,) which principle is no other than this, that they who are in possession of power do what they can to keep it. Christianity is answerable for no part of the mischief which has been brought upon the world by persecution, except that which has arisen from *conscientious* persecutors. Now these perhaps have never been either numerous or powerful. Nor is it to Christianity that even *their* mistake can fairly be imputed. They have been misled by an error not properly Christian or religious, but by an error in their moral philosophy. They pursued the particular, without adverting to the general consequence. Believing certain articles of faith, or a certain mode of worship, to be highly conducive, or perhaps essential, to salvation, they thought themselves bound to bring all they could, by every means, into them, and this they thought, without considering what would be the effect of such a conclusion, when adopted amongst mankind as a general rule of conduct. Had there been in the New Testament, what there are in the Koran, precepts authorizing coercion in the propagation of the religion, and the use of violence towards unbelievers, the case would have been different. This distinction could not have been taken, nor this defence made.

I apologize for no species nor degree of persecution, but I

think that even the fact has been exaggerated. The slave-trade destroys more in a year than the Inquisition does in a hundred, or perhaps hath done since its foundation.

If it be objected, as I apprehend it will be, that Christianity is chargeable with every mischief, of which it has been the *occasion*, though not the motive; I answer, that, if the malevolent passions be there, the world will never want occasions. The noxious element will always find a conductor. Any point will produce an explosion. Did the applauded intercommunity of the Pagan theology preserve the peace of the Roman world? did it prevent oppressions, proscriptions, massacres, devastations? Was it bigotry that carried Alexander into the East, or brought Cæsar into Gaul. Are the nations of the world, into which Christianity hath not found its way, or from which it hath been banished, free from contentions? Are their contentions less ruinous and sanguinary? Is it owing to Christianity, or to the want of it, that the finest regions of the East, the countries *inter quatuor maria*, the peninsula of Greece, together with a great part of the Mediterranean coast, are at this day a desert? or that the banks of the Nile, whose constantly renewed fertility is not to be impaired by neglect, or destroyed by the ravages of war, serve only for the scene of a ferocious anarchy, or the supply of unceasing hostilities? Europe itself has known no religious wars for some centuries, yet has hardly ever been without war. Are the calamities, which at this day afflict it, to be imputed to Christianity? Hath Poland fallen by a Christian crusade? Hath the overthrow in France of civil order and security been effected by the votaries of our religion, or by the foes? Amongst the awful lessons, which the crimes and the miseries of that country afford to mankind, this is one; that, in order to be a persecutor, it is not necessary to be a bigot: that in rage and cruelty, in mischief and destruction, fanaticism itself can be outdone by infidelity.

Finally, If war, as it is now carried on between nations, produce less misery and ruin than formerly, we are indebted perhaps to Christianity for the change, more than to any other cause. Viewed therefore even in its relation to this subject, it appears to have been of advantage to the world. It hath humanized the conduct of wars; it hath ceased to excite them.

The differences of opinion, that have in all ages prevailed

amongst Christians, fall very much within the alternative which has been stated. If we possessed the disposition which Christianity labours, above all other qualities, to inculcate, these differences would do little harm. If that disposition be wanting, other causes, even were these absent, would continually rise up to call forth the malevolent passions into action. Differences of opinion, when accompanied with mutual charity, which Christianity forbids them to violate, are for the most part innocent, and for some purposes useful. They promote inquiry, discussion, and knowledge. They help to keep up an attention to religious subjects, and a concern about them, which might be apt to die away in the calm and silence of universal agreement. I do not know that it is in any degree true, that the influence of religion is the greatest, where there are the fewest dissenters.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE CONCLUSION.

IN religion, as in every other subject of human reasoning, much depends upon the *order* in which we dispose our inquiries. A man who takes up a system of divinity with a previous opinion, that either every part must be true, or the whole false, approaches the discussion with great disadvantage. No other system, which is founded upon moral evidence, would bear to be treated in the same manner. Nevertheless, in a certain degree, we are all introduced to our religious studies under this prejudication. And it cannot be avoided. The weakness of the human judgement in the early part of youth, yet its extreme susceptibility of impression, renders it necessary to furnish it with some opinions, and with some principles or other. Or indeed, without much express care, or much endeavour for this purpose, the tendency of the mind of man to assimilate itself to the habits of thinking and speaking which prevail around him, produces the same effect. That indifferency and suspense, that waiting and equilibrium of the judgement, which some require in religious matters, and which some would wish to be aimed at in the conduct of education, are impossible to be preserved. They are not given to the condition of human life.



It is a consequence of this institution that the doctrines of religion come to us before the proofs; and come to us with that mixture of explications and inferences from which no public creed is, or can be, free. And the effect which too frequently follows, from Christianity being presented to the understanding in this form, is, that when any articles, which appear as parts of it, contradict the apprehension of the persons to whom it is proposed, men of rash and confident tempers hastily and indiscriminately reject the whole. But is this to do justice, either to themselves, or to the religion? The rational way of treating a subject of such acknowledged importance is to attend, in the first place, to the general and substantial truth of its principles, and to that alone. When we once feel a foundation; when we once perceive a ground of credibility in its history, we shall proceed with safety to inquire into the interpretation of its records, and into the doctrines which have been deduced from them. Nor will it either endanger our faith, or diminish or alter our motives for obedience, if we should discover that these conclusions are formed with very different degrees of probability, and possess very different degrees of importance.

This conduct of the understanding, dictated by every rule of right reasoning, will uphold personal Christianity, even in those countries in which it is established under forms the most liable to difficulty and objection. It will also have the further effect of guarding us against the prejudices which are wont to arise in our minds to the disadvantage of religion, from observing the numerous controversies which are carried on amongst its professors; and likewise of inducing a spirit of lenity and moderation in our judgement, as well as in our treatment of those who stand, in such controversies, upon sides opposite to ours. What is clear in Christianity, we shall find to be sufficient, and to be infinitely valuable; what is dubious, unnecessary to be decided, or of very subordinate importance; and what is most obscure, will teach us to bear with the opinions which others may have formed upon the same subject. We shall say to those who the most widely dissent from us, what Augustine said to the worst heretics of his age: "*Illi in vos sæviant, qui nesciunt, cum quo labore verum inveniat, et quàm difficilè caveantur errores;—qui nesciunt, cum quantâ difficultate sanetur oculus interioris hominis;—qui nesciunt,*

quibus suspiriis et gemitibus fiat ut ex quantulâcunque parte possit intelligi Deus."<sup>a</sup>

A judgement, moreover, which is once pretty well satisfied of the general truth of the religion, will not only thus discriminate in its doctrines, but will possess sufficient strength to overcome the reluctance of the imagination to admit articles of faith which are attended with difficulty of apprehension, if such articles of faith appear to be truly parts of the revelation. It was to be expected beforehand, that what related to the œconomy, and to the persons, of the invisible world, which revelation professes to do, and which, if true, it actually does, should contain some points remote from our analogies, and from the comprehension of a mind which hath acquired all its ideas from sense and from experience.

It hath been my care, in the preceding work, to preserve the separation between evidences and doctrines as inviolable as I could; to remove from the primary question all considerations which have been unnecessarily joined with it; and to offer a defence to Christianity, which every Christian might read, without seeing the tenets in which he had been brought up attacked or decried: and it always afforded a satisfaction to my mind to observe that this was practicable; that few or none of our many controversies with one another affect or relate to the proofs of our religion; that the rent never descends to the foundation.

The truth of Christianity depends upon its leading facts, and upon them alone. Now of these we have evidence which ought to satisfy us, at least until it appear that mankind have ever been deceived by the same. We have some uncontested and incontestable points, to which the history of the human species hath nothing similar to offer. A Jewish peasant changed the religion of the world, and that without force, without power, without support; without one natural source or circumstance of attraction, influence, or success. Such a thing hath not happened in any other instance. The companions of this Person, after he himself had been put to death for his attempt, asserted his supernatural character, founded upon his supernatural operations: and, in testimony of the truth of their assertions, *i. e.* in consequence of their own

<sup>a</sup> Aug. contra Ep. Fund. cap. ii. n. 2, 3.

belief of that truth, and in order to communicate the knowledge of it to others, voluntarily entered upon lives of toil and hardship, and, with a full experience of their danger, committed themselves to the last extremities of persecution. This hath not a parallel. More particularly, a very few days after this Person had been publicly executed, and in the very city in which he was buried, these his companions declared with one voice that his body was restored to life: that they had seen him, handled him, ate with him, conversed with him; and, in pursuance of their persuasion of the truth of what they told, preached his religion, with this strange fact as the foundation of it, in the face of those who had killed him, who were armed with the power of the country, and necessarily and naturally disposed to treat his followers as they had treated himself; and having done this upon the spot where the event took place, carried the intelligence of it abroad, in despite of difficulties and opposition, and where the nature of their errand gave them nothing to expect but derision, insult, and outrage.—This is without example. These three facts, I think, are certain, and would have been nearly so, if the Gospels had never been written. The Christian story, as to these points, hath never varied. No other hath been set up against it. Every letter, every discourse, every controversy, amongst the followers of the religion; every book written by them, from the age of its commencement to the present time, in every part of the world in which it hath been professed, and with every sect into which it hath been divided (and we have letters and discourses written by contemporaries, by witnesses of the transaction, by persons themselves bearing a share in it, and other writings following that age in regular succession) *concur* in representing these facts in this manner. A religion, which now possesses the greatest part of the civilized world, unquestionably sprang up at Jerusalem at this time. Some account must be given of its origin; some cause assigned for its rise. All the accounts of this origin, all the explications of this cause, whether taken from the writings of the early followers of the religion, (in which, and in which perhaps alone, it could be expected that they should be distinctly unfolded,) or from occasional notices in other writings of that or the adjoining age, either expressly allege the facts above stated as the means by which the religion was set up, or advert to its commencement in a manner which



agrees with the supposition of these facts being true, and which testifies their operation and effects.

These propositions alone lay a foundation for our faith; for they prove the existence of a transaction, which cannot even in its most *general* parts be accounted for, upon any reasonable supposition, except that of the truth of the mission. But the particulars, the *detail* of the miracles or miraculous pretences, (for such there necessarily must have been,) upon which this unexampled transaction rested, and *for* which these men acted and suffered as they did act and suffer, it is undoubtedly of great importance to us to know. We *have* this detail from the fountain-head, from the persons themselves; in accounts written by eye-witnesses of the scene, by contemporaries and companions of those who were so; not in one book, but four, each containing enough for the verification of the religion, all agreeing in the fundamental parts of the history. We have the authenticity of these books established, by more and stronger proofs than belong to almost any other ancient book whatever, and by proofs which widely distinguish them from any others claiming a similar authority to theirs. If there were any good reason for doubt concerning the names to which these books are ascribed, (which there is not, for they were never ascribed to any other, and we have evidence not long after their publication of their bearing the names which they now bear,) their antiquity, of which there is no question, their reputation and authority amongst the early disciples of the religion, of which there is as little, form a valid proof that they must, in the main at least, have agreed with what the first teachers of the religion delivered.

When we open these ancient volumes, we discover in them marks of truth, whether we consider each in itself, or collate them with one another. The writers certainly knew something of what they were writing about, for they manifest an acquaintance with local circumstances, with the history and usages of the times, which could belong only to an inhabitant of that country, living in that age. In every narrative we perceive simplicity and undesignedness; the air and the language of reality. When we compare the different narratives together, we find them so varying as to repel all suspicion of confederacy; so agreeing under this variety, as to show that the accounts had one real transaction for their common foundation; often attributing different actions and discourses to the Person whose

history, or rather memoirs of whose history, they profess to relate, yet actions and discourses so similar, as very much to bespeak the same character; which is a coincidence, that, in such writers as they were, could only be the consequence of their writing from fact, and not from imagination.

These four narratives are confined to the history of the Founder of the religion, and end with his ministry. Since, however, it is certain that the affair went on, we cannot help being anxious to know *how* it proceeded. This intelligence hath come down to us in a work purporting to be written by a person, himself connected with the business during the first stages of its progress, taking up the story where the former histories had left it, carrying on the narrative, oftentimes with great particularity, and throughout with the appearance of good sense<sup>a</sup>, information, and candour; stating all along the origin, and the only probable origin, of effects, which unquestionably were produced, together with the natural consequences of situations which unquestionably did exist; and *confirmed*, in the substance at least of the account, by the strongest possible accession of testimony which a history can receive, *original letters*, written by the person who is the principal subject of the history, written upon the business to which the history relates, and during the period, or soon after the period, which the history comprises. No man can say that this all together is not a body of strong historical evidence.

When we reflect that some of those from whom the books proceeded are related to have themselves wrought miracles, to have been the subject of miracles, or of supernatural assistance in propagating the religion, we may perhaps be led to think, that more credit, or a different kind of credit, is due to these accounts, than what can be claimed by merely human testimony. But this is an argument which cannot be addressed to sceptics or unbelievers. A man must be a Christian before he can receive it. The inspiration of the historical Scriptures, the nature, degree, and extent of that inspiration, are questions undoubtedly of serious discussion; but they are questions amongst Christians themselves, and not between them and others. The doctrine itself is by no means necessary to the belief of Christianity, which must, in the first instance at

<sup>a</sup> See Peter's speech upon curing the cripple, (Acts iii. 18,) the council of the apostles, (xv.,) Paul's discourse at Athens, (xvii. 22,) before Agrippa (xxvi.). I notice these passages, both as fraught with good sense, and as free from the smallest tincture of enthusiasm.

least, depend upon the ordinary maxims of historical credibility<sup>a</sup>.

In viewing the detail of miracles recorded in these books, we find every supposition negatived, by which they can be resolved into fraud or delusion. They were not secret, nor momentary, nor tentative, nor ambiguous ; nor performed under the sanction of authority, with the spectators on their side, or in affirmance of tenets and practices already established. We find also the evidence alleged for them, and which evidence was by great numbers received, different from that upon which other miraculous accounts rest. It was contemporary, it was published upon the spot, it continued ; it involved interests and questions of the greatest magnitude ; it contradicted the most fixed persuasions and prejudices of the persons to whom it was addressed ; it required from those who accepted it, not a simple, indolent assent, but a change, from thenceforward, of principles and conduct, a submission to consequences the most serious and the most deterring, to loss and danger, to insult, outrage, and persecution. How such a story should be false, or, if false, how under such circumstances it should make its way, I think impossible to be explained ; yet such the Christian story was, such were the circumstances under which it came forth, and in opposition to such difficulties did it prevail.

An event so connected with the religion, and with the fortunes, of the Jewish people, as one of their race, one born amongst them, establishing his authority and his law throughout a great portion of the civilized world, it was perhaps to be expected, should be noticed in the prophetic writings of that nation ; especially when this Person, together with his own mission, caused also to be acknowledged the divine original of their institution, and by those who before had altogether rejected it. Accordingly, we perceive in these writings various intimations *concurring* in the person and history of Jesus, in a manner, and in a degree, in which passages taken from these books could not be made to concur in any person arbitrarily assumed, or in any person except him who has been the author of great changes in the affairs and opinions of mankind. Of some of these predictions the weight depends a good deal upon the concurrence. Others possess great separate strength : one in particular does this in an eminent degree. It is an entire description, manifestly directed to one character and to one scene of things : it is extant in a

<sup>a</sup> See Powell's Discourses, disc. xv. p. 245.



writing, or collection of writings, declaredly prophetic ; and it applies to Christ's character, and to the circumstances of his life and death, with considerable precision, and in a way which no diversity of interpretation hath, in my opinion, been able to confound. That the advent of Christ, and the consequences of it, should not have been more distinctly revealed in the Jewish sacred books, is, I think, in some measure accounted for by the consideration, that for the Jews to have foreseen the fall of their institution, and that it was to merge at length into a more perfect and comprehensive dispensation, would have cooled too much, and relaxed, their zeal for it, and their adherence to it, upon which zeal and adherence the preservation in the world of any remains, for many ages, of religious truth might in a great measure depend.

Of what a revelation discloses to mankind, one, and only one, question can properly be asked, Was it of importance to mankind to know, or to be better assured of? In this question, when we turn our thoughts to the great Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and of a future judgement, no doubt can possibly be entertained. He who gives me riches or honours, does nothing ; he who even gives me health, does little, in comparison with that which lays before me just grounds for expecting a restoration to life, and a day of account and retribution : which thing Christianity hath done for millions.

Other articles of the Christian faith, although of infinite importance when placed beside any other topic of human inquiry, are only the adjuncts and circumstances of this. They are, however, such as appear worthy of the original to which we ascribe them. The morality of the religion, whether taken from the precepts or the example of its Founder, or from the lessons of its primitive teachers, derived, as it should seem, from what had been inculcated by their Master, is, in all its parts, wise and pure ; neither adapted to vulgar prejudices, nor flattering popular notions, nor excusing established practices, but calculated, in the matter of its instruction, truly to promote human happiness, and in the form in which it was conveyed, to produce impression and effect ; a morality, which, let it have proceeded from any person whatever, would have been satisfactory evidence of his good sense and integrity, of the soundness of his understanding and the probity of his designs ; a morality, in every view of it, much more perfect than could have been expected from the natural circumstances and character of the per-

son who delivered it ; a morality, in a word, which is, and hath been, most beneficial to mankind.

Upon the greatest, therefore, of all possible occasions, and for a purpose of inestimable value, it pleased the Deity to vouchsafe a miraculous attestation. Having done this for the institution, when this alone could fix its authority, or give to it a beginning, he committed its future progress to the natural means of human communication, and to the influence of those causes by which human conduct and human affairs are governed. The seed, being sown, was left to vegetate ; the leaven, being inserted, was left to ferment ; and both according to the laws of nature : laws, nevertheless, disposed and controlled by that Providence which conducts the affairs of the universe, though by an influence inscrutable, and generally undistinguishable by us. And in this, Christianity is analogous to most other provisions for happiness. The provision is made ; and, being made, is left to act according to laws, which, forming a part of a more general system, regulate this particular subject, in common with many others.

Let the constant recurrence to our observation of contrivance, design, and wisdom, in the works of nature, once fix upon our minds the belief of a God, and after that all is easy. In the counsels of a being possessed of the power and disposition which the Creator of the universe must possess, it is not improbable that there should be a future state ; it is not improbable that we should be acquainted with it. A future state rectifies every thing ; because, if moral agents be made, in the last event, happy or miserable, according to their conduct in the station and under the circumstances in which they are placed, it seems not very material by the operation of what causes, according to what rules, or even, if you please to call it so, by what chance or caprice, these stations are assigned, or these circumstances determined. This hypothesis, therefore, solves all that objection to the divine care and goodness, which the promiscuous distribution of good and evil (I do not mean in the doubtful advantages of riches and grandeur, but in the unquestionably important distinctions of health and sickness, strength and infirmity, bodily ease and pain, mental alacrity and depression) is apt on so many occasions to create. This one truth changes the nature of things ; gives order to confusion ; makes the moral world of a piece with the natural.

Nevertheless, a higher degree of assurance than that to which it is possible to advance this, or any argument drawn from the light of nature, was necessary, especially to overcome the shock which the imagination and the senses receive from the effects and the appearances of death, and the obstruction which thence arises to the expectation of either a continued or a future existence. This difficulty, although of a nature, no doubt, to act very forcibly, will be found, I think, upon reflection, to reside more in our habits of apprehension, than in the subject; and that the giving way to it, when we have any reasonable grounds for the contrary, is rather an indulging of the imagination, than any thing else. Abstractedly considered, that is, considered without relation to the difference which habit, and merely habit, produces in our faculties and modes of apprehension, I do not see any thing more in the resurrection of a dead man, than in the conception of a child; except it be this, that the one comes into his world with a system of prior consciousness about him, which the other does not: and no person will say, that he knows enough of either subject to perceive, that this circumstance makes such a difference in the two cases, that the one should be easy and the other impossible; the one natural, the other not so. To the first man, the succession of the species would be as incomprehensible, as the resurrection of the dead is to us.

Thought is different from motion, perception from impact: the individuality of a mind is hardly consistent with the divisibility of an extended substance; or its volition, that is, its power of originating motion, with the inertness which cleaves to every portion of matter which our observation or our experiments can reach. These distinctions lead us to an *immaterial* principle: at least, they do this: they so negative the mechanical properties of matter, in the constitution of a sentient, still more of a rational, being, that no argument drawn from these properties can be of any great weight in opposition to other reasons, when the question respects the changes of which such a nature is capable, or the manner in which these changes are effected. Whatever thought be, or whatever it depend upon, the regular experience of *sleep* makes one thing concerning it certain, that it can be completely suspended, and completely restored.

If any one find it too great a strain upon his thoughts, to ad-



mit the notion of a substance strictly immaterial, that is, from which extension and solidity are excluded, he can find no difficulty in allowing, that a particle as small as a particle of light, minuter than all conceivable dimensions, may just as easily be the depository, the organ, and the vehicle of consciousness, as the congeries of animal substance which forms a human body, or the human brain; that, being so, it may transfer a proper identity to whatever shall hereafter be united to it; may be safe amidst the destruction of its integuments; may connect the natural with the spiritual, the corruptible with the glorified body. If it be said, that the mode and means of all this is imperceptible by our senses, it is only what is true of the most important agencies and operations. The great powers of nature are all invisible. Gravitation, electricity, magnetism, though constantly present, and constantly exerting their influence; though within us, near us, and about us; though diffused throughout all space, overspreading the surface, or penetrating the texture, of all bodies with which we are acquainted, depend upon substances and actions which are totally concealed from our senses. The Supreme Intelligence is so himself.

But whether these or any other attempts to satisfy the imagination, bear any resemblance to the truth, or whether the imagination, which, as I have said before, is the mere slave of habit, *can* be satisfied or not; when a future state, and the revelation of a future state, is not only perfectly consistent with the attributes of the Being who governs the universe; but when it is more; when it alone removes the appearance of contrariety which attend the operations of his will towards creatures capable of comparative merit and demerit, of reward and punishment; when a strong body of historical evidence, confirmed by many internal tokens of truth and authenticity, gives us just reason to believe that such a revelation hath actually been made; we ought to set our minds at rest with the assurance, that in the resources of Creative Wisdom, expedients cannot be wanted to carry into effect what the Deity hath purposed: that either a new and mighty influence will descend upon the human world to resuscitate extinguished consciousness; or, that, amidst the other wonderful contrivances with which the universe abounds, and by some of which we see animal life, in many instances, assuming improved forms of existence, acquiring new organs, new perceptions, and new sources of enjoyment, provision is also

made, though by methods secret to us, (as all the great processes of nature are,) for conducting the objects of God's moral government, through the necessary changes of their frame, to those final distinctions of happiness and misery, which he hath declared to be reserved for obedience and transgression, for virtue and vice, for the use and the neglect, the right and the wrong employment of the faculties and opportunities with which he hath been pleased, severally, to intrust, and to try us.

**HORÆ PAULINÆ;**  
**OR,**  
**THE TRUTH**  
**OF THE**  
**SCRIPTURE HISTORY OF ST. PAUL EVINCED.**





TO  
THE RIGHT REVEREND  
JOHN LAW, D.D.  
LORD BISHOP OF KILLALA AND ACHONRY,  
AS A TESTIMONY OF ESTEEM  
FOR HIS VIRTUES AND LEARNING,  
AND OF GRATITUDE  
FOR THE LONG AND FAITHFUL FRIENDSHIP  
WITH WHICH  
THE AUTHOR HAS BEEN HONOURED  
BY HIM,  
THIS ATTEMPT TO CONFIRM THE EVIDENCE  
OF THE CHRISTIAN HISTORY  
IS INSCRIBED,  
BY HIS AFFECTIONATE  
AND MOST OBLIGED SERVANT,  
W. PALEY.





THE  
T R U T H  
OF THE  
SCRIPTURE HISTORY OF SAINT PAUL EVINCED.

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CHAPTER I.

EXPOSITION OF THE ARGUMENT.

THE volume of Christian Scriptures contains thirteen letters purporting to be written by Saint Paul; it contains also a book, which, amongst other things, professes to deliver the history, or rather memoirs of the history, of this same person. By assuming the genuineness of the letters, we may prove the substantial truth of the history; or, by assuming the truth of the history, we may argue strongly in support of the genuineness of the letters. But I assume neither one nor the other. The reader is at liberty to suppose these writings to have been lately discovered in the library of the Escorial, and to come to our hands destitute of any extrinsic or collateral evidence whatever; and the argument I am about to offer is calculated to show, that a comparison of the different writings would, even under these circumstances, afford good reason to believe the persons and transactions to have been real, the letters authentic, and the narration in the main to be true.

Agreement or conformity between letters bearing the name of an ancient author, and a received history of that author's life, does not necessarily establish the credit of either: because,

1. The history may, like Middleton's *Life of Cicero*, or Jortin's *Life of Erasmus*, have been wholly, or in part, compiled

from the letters: in which case it is manifest that the history adds nothing to the evidence already afforded by the letters; or,

2. The letters may have been fabricated out of the history: a species of imposture which is certainly practicable; and which, without any accession of proof or authority, would necessarily produce the appearance of consistency and agreement; or,

3. The history and letters may have been founded upon some authority common to both; as upon reports and traditions which prevailed in the age in which they were composed, or upon some ancient record now lost, which both writers consulted: in which case also, the letters, without being genuine, may exhibit marks of conformity with the history; and the history, without being true, may agree with the letters.

Agreement therefore, or conformity, is only to be relied upon so far as we can exclude these several suppositions. Now the point to be noticed is, that in the three cases above enumerated, conformity must be the effect of *design*. Where the history is compiled from the letters, which is the first case, the design and composition of the work are in general so confessed, or made so evident by comparison, as to leave us in no danger of confounding the production with original history, or of mistaking it for an independent authority. The agreement, it is probable, will be close and uniform, and will easily be perceived to result from the intention of the author, and from the plan and conduct of his work.—Where the letters are fabricated from the history, which is the second case, it is always for the purpose of imposing a forgery upon the public: and in order to give colour and probability to the fraud, names, places, and circumstances, found in the history, may be studiously introduced into the letters, as well as a general consistency be endeavoured to be maintained. But here it is manifest that whatever congruity appears, is the consequence of meditation, artifice, and design.—The third case is that wherein the history and the letters, without any direct privity or communication with each other, derive their materials from the same source; and, by reason of their common original, furnish instances of accordance and correspondence. This is a situation in which we must allow it to be possible for ancient writings to be placed; and it is a situation in which it is more difficult to distinguish spurious from genuine writings, than in either of the cases described in the preceding supposi-

tions; inasmuch as the congruities observable are so far accidental, as that they are not produced by the immediate transplanting of names and circumstances out of one writing into the other. But although, with respect to each other, the agreement in these writings be mediate and secondary, yet is it not properly or absolutely undesigned: because, with respect to the common original from which the information of the writers proceeds, it is studied and factitious. The case of which we treat must, as to the letters, be a case of forgery: and when the writer who is personating another sits down to his composition—whether he have the history with which we now compare the letters, or some other record before him; or whether we have only loose tradition and reports to go by—he must adapt his imposture, as well as he can, to what he finds in these accounts; and his adaptations will be the result of counsel, scheme, and industry: art must be employed; and vestiges will appear of management and design. Add to this, that, in most of the following examples, the circumstances in which the coincidence is remarked are of too particular and domestic a nature, to have floated down upon the stream of general tradition.

Of the three cases which we have stated, the difference between the first and the two others is, that in the first the design may be fair and honest, in the others it must be accompanied with the consciousness of fraud; but in all there is design. In examining, therefore, the agreement between ancient writings, the character of truth and originality is undesignedness; and this test applies to every supposition; for, whether we suppose the history to be true, but the letters spurious; or, the letters to be genuine, but the history false; or, lastly, falsehood to belong to both—the history to be a fable, and the letters fictitious: the same inference will result—that either there will be no agreement between them, or the agreement will be the effect of design. Nor will it elude the principle of this rule, to suppose the same person to have been the author of all the letters, or even the author both of the letters and the history; for no less design is necessary to produce coincidence between different parts of a man's own writings, especially when they are made to take the different forms of a history and of original letters, than to adjust them to the circumstances found in any other writing.

With respect to those writings of the New Testament which are to be the subject of our present consideration, I think that,



as to the authenticity of the epistles, this argument, where it is sufficiently sustained by instances, is nearly conclusive; for I cannot assign a supposition of forgery, in which coincidences of the kind we inquire after are likely to appear. As to the history, it extends to these points:—It proves the general reality of the circumstances: it proves the historian's knowledge of these circumstances. In the present instance it confirms his pretensions of having been a contemporary, and in the latter part of his history a companion, of Saint Paul. In a word, it establishes the substantial truth of the narration; and *substantial* truth is that which, in every historical inquiry, ought to be the first thing sought after and ascertained: it must be the groundwork of every other observation.

The reader then will please to remember this word *undesignedness*, as denoting that upon which the construction and validity of our argument chiefly depend.

As to the proofs of undesignedness, I shall in this place say little; for I had rather the reader's persuasion should arise from the instances themselves, and the separate remarks with which they may be accompanied, than from any previous formulary or description of argument. In a great plurality of examples, I trust he will be perfectly convinced that no design or contrivance whatever has been exercised: and if some of the coincidences alleged appear to be minute, circuitous, or oblique, let him reflect that this very indirectness and subtilty is that which gives force and propriety to the example. Broad, obvious, and explicit agreements, prove little; because it may be suggested that the insertion of such is the ordinary expedient of every forgery: and though they may occur, and probably will occur, in genuine writings, yet it cannot be proved that they are peculiar to these. Thus what Saint Paul declares in chap. xi. of 1 Cor. concerning the institution of the eucharist—"For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me"—though it be in close and verbal conformity with the account of the same transaction preserved by Saint Luke, is yet a conformity of which no use can be made in our argument; for if it should be objected that this was a mere recital from the Gospel, borrowed by the author of the epistle, for the purpose of setting off his composition by an appearance of agreement with the re-

ceived account of the Lord's supper, I should not know how to repel the insinuation. In like manner, the description which Saint Paul gives of himself in his epistle to the Philippians (iii. 5.)—"Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"—is made up of particulars so plainly delivered concerning him in the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistle to the Romans, and the Epistle to the Galatians, that I cannot deny but that it would be easy for an impostor, who was fabricating a letter in the name of Saint Paul, to collect these articles into one view. This, therefore, is a conformity which we do not adduce. But when I read in the Acts of the Apostles, that when "Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, behold a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman *which was a Jewess*;" and when, in an epistle addressed to Timothy, I find him reminded of his "having known the Holy Scriptures *from a child*," which implies that he must, on one side or both, have been brought up by Jewish parents: I conceive that I remark a coincidence which shows, by its very *obliquity*, that scheme was not employed in its formation. In like manner, if a coincidence depend upon a comparison of dates, or rather of circumstances from which the dates are gathered—the more intricate that comparison shall be; the more numerous the intermediate steps through which the conclusion is deduced; in a word, the more *circuitous* the investigation is, the better, because the agreement which finally results is thereby farther removed from the suspicion of contrivance, affectation, or design. And it should be remembered, concerning these coincidences, that it is one thing to be minute, and another to be precarious; one thing to be unobserved, and another to be obscure; one thing to be circuitous or oblique, and another to be forced, dubious, or fanciful. And this distinction ought always to be retained in our thoughts.

The very particularity of Saint Paul's epistles; the perpetual recurrence of names of persons and places; the frequent allusions to the incidents of his private life, and the circumstances of his condition and history; and the connexion and parallelism of these with the same circumstances in the Acts of the Apostles, so as to enable us, for the most part, to confront them one with another; as well as the relation which subsists between



the circumstances, as mentioned or referred to in the different epistles—afford no inconsiderable proof of the genuineness of the writings, and the reality of the transactions. For as no adversity is sufficient to guard against slips and contradictions, when circumstances are multiplied, and when they are liable to be detected by contemporary accounts equally circumstantial, an impostor, I should expect, would either have avoided particulars entirely, contenting himself with doctrinal discussions, moral precepts, and general reflections<sup>a</sup>; or if, for the sake of imitating Saint Paul's style, he should have thought it necessary to intersperse his composition with names and circumstances, he would have placed them out of the reach of comparison with the history. And I am confirmed in this opinion by the inspection of two attempts to counterfeit Saint Paul's epistles, which have come down to us; and the only attempts of which we have any knowledge, that are at all deserving of regard. One of these is an epistle to the Laodiceans, extant in Latin, and preserved by Fabricius in his collection of apocryphal scriptures. The other purports to be an epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians; in answer to an epistle from the Corinthians to him. This was translated by Scroderus from a copy in the Armenian language which had been sent to W. Whiston, and was afterwards from a more perfect copy, procured at Aleppo, published by his sons, as an appendix to their edition of Moses Chorenensis. No Greek copy exists of either: they are not only not supported by ancient testimony, but they are negatived and excluded; as they have never found admission into any catalogue of apostolical writings, acknowledged by, or known to, the early ages of Christianity. In the first of these I found, as I expected, a total *evitation* of circumstances. It is simply a collection of sentences from the canonical epistles, strung together with very little skill. The second, which is a more versute and specious forgery, is introduced with a list of names of persons who wrote to Saint Paul from Corinth; and is preceded by an account sufficiently

<sup>a</sup> This, however, must not be misunderstood. A person writing to his friends, and upon a subject in which the transactions of his own life were concerned, would probably be led in the course of his letter, especially if it was a long one, to refer to passages found in his history. A person addressing an epistle to the public at large, or under the form of an epistle delivering a discourse upon some speculative argument, would not, it is probable, meet with an occasion of alluding to the circumstances of his life at all: he might, or he might not; the chance on either side is nearly equal. This is the situation of the catholic epistle. Although therefore, the presence of these allusions and agreements be a valuable accession to the arguments by which the authenticity of a letter is maintained, yet the want of them certainly forms no positive objection.



particular of the manner in which the epistle was sent from Corinth to Saint Paul, and the answer returned. But they are names which no one ever heard of: and the account it is impossible to combine with any thing found in the Acts, or in the other epistles. It is not necessary for me to point out the internal marks of spuriousness and imposture which these compositions betray; but it was necessary to observe, that they do not afford those coincidences which we propose as proofs of authenticity in the epistles which we defend.

Having explained the general scheme and formation of the argument, I may be permitted to subjoin a brief account of the manner of conducting it.

I have disposed the several instances of agreement under separate numbers; as well to mark more sensibly the divisions of the subject, as for another purpose, viz. that the reader may thereby be reminded that the instances are independent of one another. I have advanced nothing which I did not think probable; but the degree of probability by which different instances are supported, is undoubtedly very different. If the reader, therefore, meets with a number which contains an instance that appears to him unsatisfactory, or founded in mistake, he will dismiss that number from the argument, but without prejudice to any other. He will have occasion also to observe, that the coincidences discoverable in some epistles are much fewer and weaker than what are supplied by others. But he will add to his observation this important circumstance—that whatever ascertains the original of one epistle, in some measure establishes the authority of the rest. For, whether these epistles be genuine or spurious, every thing about them indicates that they come from the same hand. The diction, which it is extremely difficult to imitate, preserves its resemblance and peculiarity throughout all the epistles. Numerous expressions and singularities of style, found in no other part of the New Testament, are repeated in different epistles; and occur in their respective places, without the smallest appearance of force or art. An involved argumentation, frequent obscurities, especially in the order and transition of thought, piety, vehemence, affection, bursts of rapture, and of unparalleled sublimity, are properties, all, or most of them, discernible in every letter of the collection. But although these epistles bear strong marks of proceeding from the same hand, I think it is still more certain that they were originally separate publications. They form no continued story;

they compose no regular correspondence ; they comprise not the transactions of any particular period ; they carry on no connexion of argument ; they depend not upon one another ; except in one or two instances, they refer not to one another. I will farther undertake to say, that no study or care has been employed to produce or preserve an appearance of consistency amongst them. All which observations show that they were not intended by the person, whoever he was, that wrote them, to come forth or be read together : that they appeared at first separately, and have been collected since.

The proper purpose of the following work is to bring together, from the Acts of the Apostles, and from the different epistles, such passages as furnish examples of undesigned coincidence ; but I have so far enlarged upon this plan, as to take into it some circumstances found in the epistles, which contributed strength to the conclusion, though not strictly objects of comparison.

It appeared also a part of the same plan, to examine the difficulties which presented themselves in the course of our inquiry.

I do not know that the subject has been proposed or considered in this view before. Ludovicus, Capellus, Bishop Pearson, Dr. Benson, and Dr. Lardner, have each given a continued history of St. Paul's life, made up from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles joined together. But this, it is manifest, is a different undertaking from the present, and directed to a different purpose.

If what is here offered shall add one thread to that complication of probabilities by which the Christian history is attested, the reader's attention will be repaid by the supreme importance of the subject ; and my design will be fully answered.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

#### No. I.

THE first passage I shall produce from this epistle, and upon which a good deal of observation will be founded, is the following :

“ But now I go unto Jerusalem, to minister unto the saints ; for it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a

certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." Rom. xv. 25, 26.

In this quotation three distinct circumstances are stated—a contribution in Macedonia for the relief of the Christians of Jerusalem, a contribution in Achaia for the same purpose, and an intended journey of St. Paul to Jerusalem. These circumstances are stated as taking place at the same time, and that to be the time when the epistle was written. Now let us inquire whether we can find these circumstances elsewhere; and whether, if we do find them, they meet together in respect of date. Turn to the Acts of the Apostles, chap. xx. ver. 2, 3, and you read the following account: "When he had gone over those parts, (viz. Macedonia,) and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, and there abode three months; and when the Jews laid wait for him, *as he was about to sail into Syria*, he proposed to return through Macedonia." From this passage, compared with the account of St. Paul's travels given before, and from the sequel of the chapter, it appears that upon Saint Paul's *second* visit to the peninsula of Greece, his intention was, when he should leave the country, to proceed from Achaia directly by sea to Syria; but that to avoid the Jews, who were lying in wait to intercept him in his route, he so far changed his purpose as to go back through Macedonia, embark at Philippi, and pursue his voyage from thence towards Jerusalem. Here therefore is a journey to Jerusalem; but not a syllable of any contribution. And as St. Paul had taken several journeys to Jerusalem before, and one also immediately after his *first* visit into the peninsula of Greece, (Acts xviii. 21,) it cannot from hence be collected in which of these visits the epistle was written, or, with certainty, that it was written in either. The silence of the historian, who professes to have been with St. Paul at the time, (c. xx. v. 6,) concerning any contribution, might lead us to look out for some different journey, or might induce us perhaps to question the consistency of the two records, did not a very accidental reference, in another part of the same history, afford us sufficient ground to believe that this silence was omission. When St. Paul made his reply before Felix, to the accusations of Tertullus, he alleged, as was natural, that neither the errand which brought him to Jerusalem, nor his conduct whilst he remained there, merited the calumnies with which the Jews had aspersed him. "Now after many years (i. e. of absence) *I came to bring alms to my nation and offer-*



*ings*; whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude nor with tumult, who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me." Acts xxiv. 17—19. This mention of alms and offerings certainly brings the narrative in the Acts nearer to an accordancy with the epistle; yet no one, I am persuaded, will suspect that this clause was put into St. Paul's defence, either to supply the omission in the preceding narrative, or with any view to such accordancy.

After all, nothing is yet said or hinted concerning the *place* of the contribution; nothing concerning Macedonia and Achaia. Turn therefore to the First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xvi. ver. 1—4, and you have St. Paul delivering the following directions: "Concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye; upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever you shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem; and if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me." In this passage we find a contribution carrying on at Corinth, the capital of Achaia, for the Christians of Jerusalem: we find also a hint given of the possibility of St. Paul going up to Jerusalem himself, after he had paid his visit into Achaia: but this is spoken of rather as a possibility than as any settled intention; for his first thought was, "Whomsoever you shall approve by your letters, them will I *send* to bring your liberality to Jerusalem:" and in the sixth verse he adds, "That ye may bring me on my journey *whithersoever* I go." This epistle purports to be written after St. Paul had been at Corinth; for it refers throughout to what he had done and said amongst them whilst he was there. The expression, therefore, "when I come," must relate to a *second* visit; against which visit the contribution spoken of was desired to be in readiness.

But though the contribution in Achaia be expressly mentioned, nothing is here said concerning any contribution in Macedonia. Turn therefore, in the third place, to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. viii. ver. 1—4, and you will discover the particular which remains to be sought for: "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the *churches of Macedonia*; how that, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded

unto the riches of their liberality : for to their power, I bear record, yea and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves ; praying us, with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." To which add, chap. ix. ver. 2 : " I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago." In this epistle we find St. Paul advanced as far as Macedonia, upon that *second* visit to Corinth which he promised in his former epistle : we find also, in the passages now quoted from it, that a contribution was going on in Macedonia at the same time with, or soon however following, the contribution which was made in Achaia ; but for whom the contribution was made does not appear in this epistle at all : that information must be supplied from the first epistle.

Here therefore, at length, but fetched from three different writings, we have obtained the several circumstances we inquired after, and which the Epistle to the Romans brings together, viz. a contribution in Achaia for the Christians of Jerusalem ; a contribution in Macedonia for the same ; and an approaching journey of St. Paul to Jerusalem. We have these circumstances—each by some hint in the passage in which it is mentioned, or by the date of the writing in which the passage occurs—fixed to a particular time ; and we have that time turning out upon examination, to be in all the *same* : namely, towards the close of St. Paul's second visit to the peninsula of Greece. This is an instance of conformity beyond the possibility, I will venture to say, of random writing to produce ; I also assert, that it is in the highest degree improbable that it should have been the effect of contrivance and design. The imputation of *design* amounts to this : that the forger of the Epistle to the Romans inserted in it the passage upon which our observations are founded, for the purpose of giving colour to his forgery by the appearance of conformity with other writings which were then extant. I reply, in the first place, that, if he did this to countenance his forgery, he did it for the purpose of an argument which would not strike one reader in ten thousand. Coincidences so circuitous as this answer not the ends of forgery ; are seldom, I believe, attempted by it. In the second place I observe, that he must have had the Acts of the Apostles, and the two epistles to the Corinthians, before him at the time. In the Acts of the Apostles, (I mean that part of the Acts which relates to this pe-

riod,) he would have found the journey to Jerusalem; but nothing about the contribution. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians he would have found a contribution going on in Achaia for the Christians of Jerusalem, and a distant hint of the possibility of the journey; but nothing concerning a contribution in Macedonia. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians he would have found a contribution in Macedonia accompanying that in Achaia; but no intimation for whom either was intended, and not a word about the journey. It was only by a close and attentive collation of the three writings, that he could have picked out the circumstances which he has united in his epistle, and by a still more nice examination, that he could have determined them to belong to the same period. In the third place, I remark, what diminishes very much the suspicion of fraud, how aptly and connectedly the mention of the circumstances in question, viz. the journey to Jerusalem, and of the occasion of that journey, arises from the context: "Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you; for I trust to see you in my journey, and be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. *But now I go unto Jerusalem, to minister unto the saints; for it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.* It hath pleased them verily, and their debtors they are; for, if the gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain." Is the passage in *Italics* like a passage foisted in for an extraneous purpose? Does it not arise from what goes before, by a junction as easy as any example of writing upon real business can furnish? Could any thing be more natural than that St. Paul, in writing to the Romans, should speak of the time when he hoped to visit them; should mention the business which then detained him; and that he purposed to set forwards upon his journey to them, when that business was completed?

## No. II.

By means of the quotation which formed the subject of the preceding number, we collect, that the Epistle to the Romans was written at the conclusion of St. Paul's second visit to the



peninsula of Greece ; but this we collect, not from the epistle itself, nor from any thing *declared* concerning the time and place in any part of the epistle, but from a comparison of circumstances referred to in the epistle, with the order of events recorded in the Acts, and with references to the same circumstances, though for quite different purposes, in the two epistles to the Corinthians. Now would the author of a forgery, who sought to gain credit to a spurious letter by congruities, depending upon the time and place in which the letter was supposed to be written, have left that time and place to be made out, in a manner so obscure and indirect as this is ? If therefore coincidences of circumstances can be pointed out in this epistle depending upon its date, or the place where it was written, whilst that date and place are only ascertained by other circumstances, such coincidences may fairly be stated as *undesigned*. Under this head I adduce

Chap. xvi. 21—23. “Timotheus, my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius, mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you ; and Quartus, a brother.” With this passage I compare Acts xx. 4. “And there accompanied him into Asia, Sopater of Berea ; and, of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus ; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus ; and, of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.” The Epistle to the Romans, we have seen, was written just before St. Paul’s departure from Greece, after his second visit to that peninsula : the persons mentioned in the quotation from the Acts are those who accompanied him in that departure. Of seven whose names are joined in the salutation of the church of Rome, three, viz. Sosipater, Gaius, and Timothy, are proved, by this passage in the Acts, to have been with St. Paul at the time. And this is perhaps as much coincidence as could be expected from reality, though less, I am apt to think, than would have been produced by design. Four are mentioned in the Acts who are not joined in the salutation ; and it is in the nature of the case probable that there should be many attending St. Paul in Greece who knew nothing of the converts at Rome, nor were known by them. In like manner, several are joined in the salutation who are not mentioned in the passage referred to in the Acts. This also was to be expected. The occasion of mentioning them in the Acts was their proceeding with St. Paul upon his journey. But we may

be sure that there were many eminent Christians with St. Paul in Greece, besides those who accompanied him into Asia<sup>a</sup>.

But if any one shall still contend that a forger of the epistle, with the Acts of the Apostles before him, and having settled this scheme of writing a letter as from St. Paul upon his second visit into Greece, would easily think of the expedient of putting in the names of those persons who appeared to be with St. Paul at the time as an obvious recommendation of the imposture: I then repeat my observations; first, that he would have made the catalogue more complete; and secondly, that with this contrivance in his thoughts, it was certainly his business, in order to avail himself of the artifice, to have stated in the body of the epistle, that Paul was in Greece when he wrote it, and that he was there upon his second visit. Neither of which he has done, either directly, or even so as to be discoverable by any circumstance found in the narrative delivered in the Acts.

Under the same head, viz. of coincidences depending upon date, I cite from the epistle the following salutation: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Jesus Christ, who have for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." Chap. xvi. 3.—It appears, from the Acts of the Apostles, that Priscilla and Aquila had originally been inhabitants of Rome; for we read, Acts xviii. 2, that "Paul found a certain Jew, named Aquila, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from *Rome*." They were connected, therefore, with the place to which the salutations are sent. That is one coincidence; another is the following: St. Paul became acquainted with these persons at Corinth during his first visit into Greece. They accompanied him upon

<sup>a</sup> Of these Jason is one, whose presence upon this occasion is very naturally accounted for. Jason was an inhabitant of Thessalonica in Macedonia, and entertained St. Paul in his house upon his first visit to that country. Acts xvii. 7.—St. Paul, upon this his second visit, passed through Macedonia on his way to Greece, and from the situation of Thessalonica, most likely through that city. It appears, from various instances in the Acts, to have been the practice of many converts to attend St. Paul from place to place. It is therefore highly probable, I mean that it is highly consistent with the account in the history, that Jason, according to that account a zealous disciple, the inhabitant of a city at no great distance from Greece, and through which, as it should seem, St. Paul had lately passed, should have accompanied St. Paul into Greece, and have been with him there at this time. Lucius is another name in the epistle. A very slight alteration would convert Λουκιος into Λουκας, Lucius into Luke, which would produce an additional coincidence: for, if Luke was the author of the history, he was with St. Paul at the time; inasmuch as, describing the voyage which took place soon after the writing of this epistle, the historian uses the first person, "*We* sailed away from Philippi." Acts xx. 6.

his return into Asia; were settled for some time at Ephesus, Acts xviii. 19—26; and appear to have been with St. Paul when he wrote from that place his First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Not long after the writing of which epistle St. Paul went from Ephesus into Macedonia, and, “after he had gone over those parts,” proceeded from thence upon his second visit into Greece; during which visit, or rather at the conclusion of it, the Epistle to the Romans, as hath been shown, was written. We have therefore the time of St. Paul’s residence at Ephesus after he had written to the Corinthians, the time taken up by his progress through Macedonia, (which is indefinite, and was probably considerable,) and his three months’ abode in Greece; we have the sum of those three periods allowed for Aquila and Priscilla going back to Rome, so as to be there when the epistle before us was written. Now what this quotation leads us to observe is, the danger of scattering names and circumstances in writings like the present, how implicated they often are with dates and places, and that nothing but truth can preserve consistency. Had the notes of time in the Epistle to the Romans fixed the writing of it to any date prior to St. Paul’s first residence at Corinth, the salutation of Aquila and Priscilla would have contradicted the history, because it would have been prior to his acquaintance with these persons. If the notes of time had fixed it to any period during *that* residence at Corinth, during his journey to Jerusalem when he first returned out of Greece, during his stay at Antioch, whither he went down to Jerusalem, or during his second progress through the Lesser Asia upon which he proceeded from Antioch, an equal contradiction would have been incurred; because from Acts xviii. 2—18, 19—26, it appears that during all this time Aquila and Priscilla were either along with St. Paul, or were abiding at Ephesus. Lastly, had the notes of time in this epistle, which we have seen to be perfectly incidental, compared with the notes of time in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which are equally incidental, fixed this epistle to be either contemporary with that, or prior to it, a similar contradiction would have ensued; because, first, when the Epistle to the Corinthians was written, Aquila and Priscilla were along with St. Paul, as they joined in the salutation of that church, 1 Cor. xvi. 19; and because, secondly, the history does not allow us to suppose, that between the time of their becoming acquainted with St. Paul and the time of St. Paul’s writing to the Corinthians, Aquila and Priscilla could have gone to Rome, so as to have been saluted in an



epistle to that city ; and then come back to St. Paul at Ephesus, so as to be joined with him in saluting the church of Corinth. As it is, all things are consistent. The Epistle to the Romans is posterior even to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians ; because it speaks of a contribution in Achaia being completed, which the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. viii. is only soliciting. It is sufficiently therefore posterior to the First Epistle to the Corinthians to allow time in the interval for Aquila and Priscilla's return from Ephesus to Rome.

Before we dismiss these two persons, we may take notice of the terms of commendation in which St. Paul describes them, and of the agreement of that encomium with the history. "My helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my life laid down their necks ; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." In the eighteenth chapter of the Acts, we are informed that Aquila and Priscilla were Jews ; that St. Paul first met with them at Corinth ; that for some time he abode in the same house with them ; that St. Paul's contention at Corinth was with the unbelieving Jews, who at first "opposed and blasphemed, and afterwards with one accord raised an insurrection against him ;" that Aquila and Priscilla adhered, we may conclude, to St. Paul throughout this whole contest ; for, when he left the city, they went with him, Acts xviii. 18. Under these circumstances, it is highly probable that they should be involved in the dangers and persecutions which St. Paul underwent from the Jews, being themselves Jews ; and, by adhering to St. Paul in this dispute, deserters, as they would be accounted, of the Jewish cause. Farther, as they, though Jews, were assisting to St. Paul in preaching to the Gentiles at Corinth, they had taken a decided part in the great controversy of that day, the admission of the Gentiles to a parity of religious situation with the Jews. For this conduct alone, if there was no other reason, they may seem to have been entitled to "thanks from the churches of the Gentiles." They were Jews taking part with Gentiles. Yet is all this so indirectly intimated, or rather so much of it left to inference, in the account given in the Acts, that I do not think it probable that a forger either could or would have drawn his representation from thence ; and still less probable do I think it, that, without having seen the Acts, he could, by mere accident, and without truth for his guide, have delivered a representation so conformable to the circumstances there recorded.

The two congruities last adduced depended upon the time, the two following regard the place, of the epistle.

1. Chap. xvi. 23. "Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, saluteth you"—of what city? We have seen, that is, we have inferred from circumstances found in the epistle, compared with circumstances found in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the two epistles to the Corinthians, that our epistle was written during St. Paul's second visit to the peninsula of Greece. Again, as St. Paul, in his epistle to the church of Corinth, 1 Cor. xvi. 3, speaks of a collection going on in that city, and of his desire that it might be ready against he came thither; and as in this epistle he speaks of that collection being ready, it follows that the epistle was written either whilst he was at Corinth, or after he had been there. Thirdly, since St. Paul speaks in this epistle of his journey to Jerusalem, as about instantly to take place; and as we learn, Acts, xx. 3, that his design and attempt was to sail upon that journey immediately from Greece, properly so called, *i. e.* as distinguished from Macedonia; it is probable that he was in this country when he wrote the epistle, in which he speaks of himself as upon the eve of setting out. If in Greece, he was most likely at Corinth; for the two Epistles to the Corinthians show that the principal end of his coming into Greece was to visit that city, where he had founded a church. Certainly we know no place in Greece in which his presence was so probable; at least, the placing of him at Corinth satisfies every circumstance. Now that Erastus was an inhabitant of Corinth, or had some connexion with Corinth, is rendered a fair subject of presumption, by that which is accidentally said of him in the Second Epistle to Timothy, chap. iii. 20, "Erastus abode at *Corinth*." St. Paul complains of his solitude, and is telling Timothy what was become of his companions: "Erastus abode at Corinth; but Trophimus have I left at Miletum, sick." Erastus was one of those who had attended St. Paul in his travels, Acts xix. 22; and when those travels had, upon some occasion, brought our apostle and his train to Corinth, Erastus staid there, for no reason so probable as that it was his home. I allow that this coincidence is not so precise as some others, yet I think it too clear to be produced by accident; for of the many places which this same epistle has assigned to different persons, and the innumerable others which it might have mentioned, how came it to fix upon Corinth for Erastus? And, as far as it is a coincidence, it is certainly undesigned on the

part of the author of the Epistle to the Romans : because he has not told us of what city Erastus was the chamberlain ; or, which is the same thing, from what city the epistle was written, the setting forth of which was absolutely necessary to the display of the coincidence, if any such display had been thought of : nor could the author of the Epistle to Timothy leave Erastus at Corinth, from any thing he might have read in the Epistle to the Romans, because Corinth is nowhere in that epistle mentioned either by name or description.

2. Chap. xvi. 1—3. “ I commend unto you Phœbe, our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea, that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you ; for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.” Cenchrea adjoined to Corinth ; St. Paul therefore, at the time of writing the letter, was in the neighbourhood of the woman whom he thus recommends. But, farther, that St. Paul had before this been at Cenchrea itself, appears from the eighteenth chapter of the Acts ; and appears by a circumstance as incidental, and as unlike design, as any that can be imagined. “ Paul after this tarried there (viz. at Corinth) yet a good while, and then took his leave of his brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila, having shorn his head *in Cenchrea*, for he had a vow,” xviii. 18. The shaving of the head denoted the expiration of the Nazaritic vow. The historian, therefore, by the mention of this circumstance, virtually tells us that St. Paul’s vow was expired before he set forward upon his voyage, having deferred probably his departure until he should be released from the restrictions under which his vow laid him. Shall we say that the author of the Acts of the Apostles feigned this anecdote of St. Paul at Cenchrea, because he had read in the Epistle to the Romans that “ Phœbe, a servant of the church of Cenchrea, had been a succourer of many, and of him also ? ” or shall we say that the author of the Epistle to the Romans, out of his own imagination, created Phœbe “ *a servant of the church at Cenchrea*,” because he read in the Acts of the Apostles that Paul had “ shorn his head ” in that place ?

### No. III.

Chap. i. 13. “ Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, but was let



hitherto, that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles." Again, xv. 23, 24, "But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years (*πολλὰ*, oftentimes) to come unto you, whensoever I take my journey into Spain I will come to you; for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you: but now I go up unto Jerusalem, to minister to the saints. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain."

With these passages compare Acts xix. 21, "After these things were ended, (*viz.* at Ephesus,) Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem; saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

Let it be observed that our epistle purports to have been written at the conclusion of St. Paul's second journey into Greece: that the quotation from the Acts contains words said to have been spoken by St. Paul at Ephesus, some time before he set forwards upon that journey. Now I contend that it is impossible that two independent fictions should have attributed to St. Paul the same purpose,—especially a purpose so specific and particular as this, which was not merely a general design of visiting Rome after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, and after he had performed a voyage from these countries to Jerusalem. The conformity between the history and the epistle is perfect. In the first quotation from the epistle, we find that a design of visiting Rome had long dwelt in the apostle's mind: in the quotation from the Acts, we find that design expressed a considerable time before the epistle was written. In the history we find that the plan which St. Paul had formed was, to pass through Macedonia and Achaia; after that, to go to Jerusalem; and, when he had finished his visit there, to sail for Rome. When the epistle was written, he had executed so much of his plan, as to have passed through Macedonia and Achaia; and was preparing to pursue the remainder of it, by speedily setting out towards Jerusalem; and in this point of his travels he tells his friends at Rome that when he had completed the business which carried him to Jerusalem, he would come to them. Secondly, I say that the very inspection of the passages will satisfy us that they were not made up from one another.

"Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to

you ; for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you ; but now I go up to Jerusalem, to minister to the saints. When, therefore, I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.”—This from the epistle.

“Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem : saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”—This from the Acts.

If the passage in the epistle was taken from that in the Acts, why was *Spain* put in ? If the passage in the Acts was taken from that in the epistle, why was *Spain* left out ? If the two passages were unknown to each other, nothing can account for their conformity but truth. Whether we suppose the history and the epistle to be alike fictitious, or the history to be true but the letter spurious, or the letter to be genuine but the history a fable, the meeting with this circumstance in both, if neither borrowed it from the other, is, upon all these suppositions, equally inexplicable.

#### No. IV.

The following quotation I offer for the purpose of pointing out a geographical coincidence, of so much importance, that Dr. Lardner considered it as a confirmation of the whole history of St. Paul’s travels.

Chap. xv. 19. “So that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.”

I do not think that these words necessarily import that St. Paul had penetrated into Illyricum, or preached the Gospel in that province ; but rather that he had come to the confines of Illyricum (*μεχρι του Ιλλυρικου*), and that these confines were the external boundary of his travels. St. Paul considers Jerusalem as the centre, and is here viewing the circumference to which his travels extended. The form of expression in the original conveys this idea — *απο Ιερουσαλημ και κυκλω μεχρι του Ιλλυρικου*. Illyricum was the part of this circle which he mentions in an epistle to the Romans, because it lay in a direction from Jerusalem towards that city, and pointed out to the Roman readers the nearest place to them, to which his travels from Jerusalem had brought him. The name of Illyricum nowhere occurs in the Acts of the Apostles ; no suspicion, therefore, can be received that the mention of it was borrowed from thence. Yet I think

it appears, from these same Acts, that St. Paul, before the time when he wrote his Epistle to the Romans, had reached the confines of Illyricum; or, however, that he might have done so, in perfect consistency with the account there delivered. Illyricum adjoins upon Macedonia; measuring from Jerusalem towards Rome, it lies close behind it. If, therefore, St. Paul traversed the whole country of Macedonia, the route would necessarily bring him to the confines of Illyricum, and these confines would be described as the extremity of his journey. Now the account of St. Paul's second visit to the peninsula of Greece is contained in these words: "*He departed for to go into Macedonia; and when he had gone over these parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece.*" Acts, xx. 2. This account allows, or rather leads us to suppose, that St. Paul, in going over Macedonia (*διελθὼν τὰ μέρη ἐκεῖνα*), had passed so far to the west, as to come into those parts of the country which were contiguous to Illyricum, if he did not enter into Illyricum itself. The history, therefore, and the epistles so far agree, and the agreement is much strengthened by a coincidence of *time*. At the time the epistle was written, St. Paul might say, in conformity with the history, that he had "come into Illyricum;" much before that time, he could not have said so; for, upon his former journey to Macedonia, his route is laid down from the time of his landing at Philippi to his sailing from Corinth. We trace him from Philippi to Amphipolis and Apollonia; from thence to Thessalonica; from Thessalonica to Berea; from Berea to Athens; and from Athens to Corinth: which track confines him to the eastern side of the peninsula, and therefore keeps him all the while at a considerable distance from Illyricum. Upon his second visit to Macedonia, the history, we have seen, leaves him at liberty. It must have been, therefore, upon that second visit, if at all, that he approached Illyricum; and this visit, we know, almost immediately preceded the writing of the epistle. It was natural that the apostle should refer to a journey which was fresh in his thoughts.

#### No. V.

Chap. xv. 30. "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe, in Judæa."—With this compare Acts xx. 22, 23:



“And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.”

Let it be remarked, that it is the same journey to Jerusalem which is spoken of in these two passages; that the epistle was written immediately before St. Paul set forwards upon this journey from Achaia; that the words in the Acts were uttered by him when he had proceeded in that journey as far as Miletus, in Lesser Asia. This being remembered, I observe that the two passages, without any resemblance between them that could induce us to suspect that they were borrowed from one another, represent the state of St. Paul's mind, with respect to the event of the journey, in terms of substantial agreement. They both express his sense of danger in the approaching visit to Jerusalem: they both express the doubt which dwelt upon his thoughts concerning what might there befall him. When, in his epistle, he entreats the Roman Christians, “for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, to strive together with him in their prayers to God for him, that he might be delivered from them which do not believe, in Judæa,” he sufficiently confesses his fears. In the Acts of the Apostles we see in him the same apprehensions, and the same uncertainty: “I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, *not knowing* the things that shall befall me there.” The only difference is, that in the history his thoughts are more inclined to despondency than in the epistle. In the epistle he retains his hope “that he should come unto them with joy by the will of God:” in the history, his mind yields to the reflection, “that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city that bonds and afflictions awaited him.” Now that his fears should be greater, and his hopes less, in this stage of his journey than when he wrote his epistle, that is, when he first set out upon it, is no other alteration than might well be expected; since those prophetic intimations to which he refers, when he says, “the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city,” had probably been received by him in the course of his journey, and were probably similar to what we know he received in the remaining part of it at Tyre, xxi. 4; and afterwards from Agabus at Cæsarea, xxi. 11.

## No. VI.

There is another strong remark arising from the same passage in the epistle ; to make which understood, it will be necessary to state the passage over again, and somewhat more at length.

“I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe, in Judæa—that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.”

I desire the reader to call to mind *that* part of St. Paul’s history which took place after his arrival at Jerusalem, and which employs the seven last chapters of the Acts ; and I build upon it this observation—that supposing the Epistle to the Romans to have been a forgery, and the author of the forgery to have had the Acts of the Apostles before him, and to have there seen that St. Paul, in fact, “was *not* delivered from the unbelieving Jews,” but on the contrary, that he was taken into custody at Jerusalem, and brought to Rome a prisoner—it is next to impossible that he should have made St. Paul express expectations so contrary to what he saw had been the event ; and utter prayers, with apparent hopes of success, which he must have known were frustrated in the issue.

This single consideration convinces me, that no concert or confederacy whatever subsisted between the Epistle and the Acts of the Apostles ; and that whatever coincidences have been or can be pointed out between them are unsophisticated, and are the result of truth and reality.

It also convinces me that the epistle was written not only in St. Paul’s lifetime, but before he arrived at Jerusalem ; for the important events relating to him which took place after his arrival at that city must have been known to the Christian community soon after they happened : they form the most public part of his history. But had they been known to the author of the epistle—in other words, had they then taken place—the passage which we have quoted from the epistle would not have been found there.

## No. VII.

I now proceed to state the conformity which exists between the argument of this epistle and the history of its reputed au-

thor. It is enough for this purpose to observe, that the object of the epistle, that is, of the argumentative part of it, was to place the Gentile convert upon a parity of situation with the Jewish, in respect of his religious condition, and his rank in the divine favour. The epistle supports this point by a variety of arguments; such as, that no man of either description was justified by the works of the law—for this plain reason, that no man had performed them; that it became therefore necessary to appoint another medium or condition of justification, in which new medium the Jewish peculiarity was merged and lost; that Abraham's own justification was anterior to the law and independent of it; that the Jewish converts were to consider the law as now dead, and themselves as married to another; that what the law in truth could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God had done by sending his Son; that God had rejected the unbelieving Jews, and had substituted in their place a society of believers in Christ, collected indifferently from Jews and Gentiles. Soon after the writing of this epistle, St. Paul, agreeably to the intention intimated in the epistle itself, took his journey to Jerusalem. The day after he arrived there, he was introduced to the church. What passed at this interview is thus related, Acts xxi. 19: "When he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry: and, when they heard it, they glorified the Lord; and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law; and they *are informed of thee*, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs." St. Paul disclaimed the charge; but there must have been something to have led to it. Now it is only to suppose that St. Paul openly professed the principles which the epistle contains; that, in the course of his ministry, he had uttered the sentiments which he is here made to write; and the matter is accounted for. Concerning the accusation which public rumour had brought against him to Jerusalem, I will not say that it was just; but I will say, that if he was the author of the epistle before us, and if his preaching was consistent with his writing, it was extremely natural: for though it be not a necessary, surely it is an easy inference, that if the Gentile convert, who did not observe the law of Moses, held as advantageous a situation in his religious interests as the Jewish



convert who did, there could be no strong reason for observing that law at all. The remonstrance therefore of the church of Jerusalem, and the report which occasioned it, were founded in no very violent misconstruction of the apostle's doctrine. His reception at Jerusalem was exactly what I should have expected the author of this epistle to have met with. I am entitled therefore to argue, that a separate narrative of effects experienced by St. Paul, similar to what a person might be expected to experience who held the doctrines advanced in this epistle, forms a proof that he did hold these doctrines; and that the epistle bearing his name, in which such doctrines are laid down, actually proceeded from him.

### No. VIII.

This number is supplemental to the former. I propose to point out in it two particulars in the conduct of the argument, perfectly adapted to the historical circumstances under which the epistle was written; which yet are free from all appearance of contrivance, and which it would not, I think, have entered into the mind of a sophist to contrive.

1. The Epistle to the Galatians relates to the same general question as the Epistle to the Romans. St. Paul had founded the church of Galatia; at Rome he had never been. Observe now a difference in his manner of treating of the same subject, corresponding with this difference in his situation. In the Epistle to the Galatians he puts the point in a great measure upon *authority*: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel." Gal. i. 6. "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Ch. i. 11, 12. "I am afraid, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." iv. 11, 12. "I desire to be present with you now, for I stand in doubt of you." iv. 20. "Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." v. 2. "This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you." v. 8. This is the style in which he accosts the Galatians. In the epistle to the converts of Rome, where his authority was not established, nor his person known, he puts the same points entirely upon *argument*. The perusal of the epistle will prove this to the satisfaction of

every reader ; and, as the observation relates to the whole contents of the epistle, I forbear adducing separate extracts. I repeat, therefore, that we have pointed out a distinction in the two epistles, suited to the relation in which the author stood to his different correspondents.

Another adaptation, and somewhat of the same kind, is the following :

2. The Jews, we know, were very numerous at Rome, and probably formed a principal part amongst the new converts ; so much so, that the Christians seem to have been known at Rome rather as a denomination of Jews than as any thing else. In an epistle consequently to the Roman believers, the point to be endeavoured after by St. Paul was to reconcile the *Jewish* converts to the opinion, that the Gentiles were admitted by God to a parity of religious situation with themselves, and that without their being bound by the law of Moses. The Gentile converts would probably accede to this opinion very readily. In this epistle, therefore, though directed to the Roman church in general, it is in truth a Jew writing to Jews. Accordingly you will take notice, that as often as his argument leads him to say any thing derogatory from the Jewish institution, he constantly follows it by a softening clause. Having (ii. 28, 29) pronounced, not much perhaps to the satisfaction of the native Jews, “ that he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ;” he adds immediately, “ What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there in circumcision ? *Much every way.*” Having in the third chapter, ver. 28, brought his argument to this formal conclusion, “ that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” he presently subjoins, ver. 31, “ Do we then make void the law through faith ? God forbid ! *Yea, we establish the law.*” In the seventh chapter, when in the sixth verse he had advanced the bold assertion, “ that now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held ;” in the very next verse he comes in with this healing question, “ What shall we say then ? Is the law sin ? God forbid ! Nay, I had not known sin but by the law.” Having in the following words insinuated, or rather more than insinuated, the inefficacy of the Jewish law, viii. 3, “ for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh ;” after a digression indeed, but that sort

of a digression which he could never resist, a rapturous contemplation of his Christian hope, and which occupies the latter part of this chapter; we find him in the next, as if sensible that he had said something which would give offence, returning to his Jewish brethren in terms of the warmest affection and respect. "I say the truth in Christ Jesus; I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, *for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers; and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.*" When, in the thirty-first and thirty-second verses of this ninth chapter, he represented to the Jews the error of even the best of their nation, by telling them that "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, had not attained to the law of righteousness, because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling stone," he takes care to annex to this declaration these conciliating expressions: "Brethren, *my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel* is, that they might be saved: for I bear them record that they *have a zeal of God*, but not according to knowledge." Lastly, having, ch. x. 20, 21, by the application of a passage in Isaiah, insinuated the most ungrateful of all propositions to a Jewish ear, the rejection of the Jewish nation as God's peculiar people; he hastens, as it were, to qualify the intelligence of their fall by this interesting expostulation: "I say, then, hath God cast away his people (*i. e.* wholly and entirely)? *God forbid!* for I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. *God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew;*" and follows this thought, throughout the whole of the eleventh chapter, in a series of reflections calculated to soothe the Jewish converts, as well as to procure from their Gentile brethren respect to the Jewish institution. Now all this is perfectly natural. In a real St. Paul writing to real converts, it is what anxiety to bring them over to his persuasion would naturally produce; but there is an earnestness and a personality, if I may so call it, in the manner, which a cold forgery, I apprehend, would neither have conceived nor supported.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

## No. I.

BEFORE we proceed to compare this epistle with the history, or with any other epistle, we will employ one number in stating certain remarks applicable to our argument, which arise from a perusal of the epistle itself.

By an expression in the first verse of the seventh chapter, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me," it appears, that this letter to the Corinthians was written by Saint Paul in answer to one which he had received from them; and that the seventh, and some of the following chapters, are taken up in resolving certain doubts, and regulating certain points of order, concerning which the Corinthians had in their letter consulted him. This alone is a circumstance considerably in favour of the authenticity of the epistle; for it must have been a far-fetched contrivance in a forgery, first to have feigned the receipt of a letter from the church of Corinth, which letter does not appear; and then to have drawn up a fictitious answer to it, relative to a great variety of doubts and inquiries, purely œconomical and domestic; and which, though likely enough to have occurred to an infant society, in a situation and under an institution so novel as that of a Christian church then was, it must have very much exercised the author's invention, and could have answered no imaginable purpose of forgery, to introduce the mention of at all. Particulars of the kind we refer to are such as the following: the rule of duty and prudence relative to entering into marriage, as applicable to virgins, to widows; the case of husbands married to unconverted wives, of wives having unconverted husbands; that case where the unconverted party chooses to separate, where he chooses to continue the union; the effect which their conversion produced upon their prior state, of circumcision, of slavery; the eating of things offered to idols, as it was in itself, as others were affected by it; the joining in idolatrous sacrifices; the decorum to be observed in their religious assemblies, the order of speaking, the silence of women, the covering or uncovering of the head, as it became men, as it became women. These subjects, with their several subdivi-

sions, are so particular, minute, and numerous, that, though they be exactly agreeable to the circumstances of the persons to whom the letter was written, nothing, I believe, but the existence and reality of those circumstances could have suggested to the writer's thoughts.

But this is not the only nor the principal observation upon the correspondence between the church of Corinth and their apostle, which I wish to point out. It appears, I think, in this correspondence, that although the Corinthians had written to Saint Paul, requesting his answer and his directions in the several points above enumerated, yet that they had not said one syllable about the enormities and disorders which had crept in amongst them, and in the blame of which they all shared; but that Saint Paul's information concerning the irregularities then prevailing at Corinth had come round to him from other quarters. The quarrels and disputes excited by their contentious adherence to their different teachers, and by their placing of them in competition with one another, were not mentioned in their *letter*, but communicated to Saint Paul by more private intelligence: "It hath been declared unto me, my brethren, *by them which are of the house of Chloe*, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ." (i. 11, 12.) The incestuous marriage "of a man with his father's wife," which Saint Paul reprehends with so much severity in the fifth chapter of our epistle, and which was not the crime of an individual only, but a crime in which the whole church, by tolerating and conniving at it, had rendered themselves partakers, did not come to Saint Paul's knowledge by the *letter*, but by a rumour which had reached his ears: "*It is reported commonly* that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife; and ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you." (v. 1, 2.) Their going to law before the judicature of the country, rather than arbitrate and adjust their disputes among themselves, which Saint Paul animadverts upon with his usual plainness, was not intimated to him in the *letter*, because he tells them his opinion of this conduct before he comes to the contents of the letter. Their litigiousness is censured by Saint Paul in the sixth chapter of his epistle, and it is only at the beginning of the seventh chapter that he proceeds upon the arti-

cles which he found in their letter ; and he proceeds upon them with this preface : “ Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me,” (vii. 1,) which introduction he would not have used if he had been already discussing any of the subjects concerning which they had written. Their irregularities in celebrating the Lord’s supper, and the utter perversion of the institution which ensued, were not in the letter, as is evident from the terms in which Saint Paul mentions the notice he had received of it : “ Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse ; for first of all, when ye come together in the church, *I hear* that there be divisions among you, and *I partly believe it.*” Now that the Corinthians should, in their own letter, exhibit the fair side of their conduct to the apostle, and conceal from him the faults of their behaviour, was extremely natural, and extremely probable : but it was a distinction which would not, I think, have easily occurred to the author of a forgery ; and much less likely is it, that it should have entered into his thoughts to make the distinction *appear* in the way in which it does appear, viz. not by the original letter, not by any express observation upon it in the answer, but distantly by marks perceivable in the manner, or in the order, in which Saint Paul takes notice of their faults.

## No. II.

Our epistle purports to have been written after Saint Paul had already been at Corinth : “ I, brethren, *when I came unto you*, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom” (ii. 1) : and in many other places to the same effect. It purports also to have been written upon the eve of another visit to that church : “ I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will ;” (iv. 19.) and again, “ I will come to you when I shall pass through Macedonia.” (xvi. 5.) Now the history relates that Saint Paul did in fact visit Corinth *twice* ; once as recorded at length in the eighteenth, and a second time as mentioned briefly in the twentieth chapter of the Acts. The same history also informs us, (Acts xx. 1,) that it was from Ephesus Saint Paul proceeded upon his second journey into Greece. Therefore, as the epistle purports to have been written a short time preceding that journey ; and as Saint Paul, the history tells us, had resided more than two years at Ephesus, before he set out upon it, it follows that it must have been from Ephesus, to be consistent with the



history, that the epistle was written; and every note of *place* in the epistle agrees with this supposition. "If, after the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at *Ephesus*, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?" (xv. 32.) I allow that the apostle might say this, wherever he was; but it was more natural and more to the purpose to say it, if he was at *Ephesus* at the time, and in the midst of those conflicts to which the expression relates. "The churches of Asia salute you." (xvi. 19.) Asia, throughout the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Saint Paul, does not mean the whole of Asia Minor or Anatolia, nor even the whole of the proconsular Asia, but a district in the anterior part of that country, called Lydian Asia, divided from the rest, much as Portugal is from Spain, and of which district *Ephesus* was the capital. "Aquila and Priscilla salute you." (xvi. 19.) Aquila and Priscilla were at *Ephesus* during the period within which this epistle was written. (Acts xviii. 18. 26.) "I will tarry at *Ephesus* until Pentecost." (xvi. 8.) This, I apprehend, is in terms almost asserting that he was at *Ephesus* at the time of writing the epistle.—"A great and effectual door is opened unto me." (xvi. 9.) How well this declaration corresponded with the state of things at *Ephesus*, and the progress of the Gospel in these parts, we learn from the reflection with which the historian concludes the account of certain transactions which passed there: "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed;" (Acts xix. 20;) as well as from the complaint of Demetrius, "that not only at *Ephesus*, but also throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded, and turned away much people." (xix. 26.) "And there are many adversaries," says the epistle. (xvi. 9.) Look into the history of this period: "When divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples." The conformity therefore upon this head of comparison is circumstantial and perfect. If any one think that this is a conformity so obvious, that any forger of tolerable caution and sagacity would have taken care to preserve it, I must desire such a one to read the epistle for himself; and, when he has done so, to declare whether he has discovered one mark of art or design; whether the notes of *time* and *place* appear to him to be inserted with any reference to each other, with any view of their being compared with each other, or for the purpose of establishing a visible agreement with the history, in respect of them.

## No. III.

Chap. iv. 17—19. “For this cause I have sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church. Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come unto you; but I will come unto you shortly, if the Lord will.”

With this I compare Acts xix. 21, 22: “After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and *Achaia*, to go to Jerusalem; saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome; *so* he sent unto Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, *Timotheus* and Erastus.”

Though it be not said, it appears I think with sufficient certainty, I mean from the history, independently of the epistle, that Timothy was sent upon this occasion into *Achaia*, of which Corinth was the capital city, as well as into Macedonia: for the sending of Timothy and Erastus is, in the passage where it is mentioned, plainly connected with St. Paul’s own journey: *he sent them before him*. As he therefore purposed to go into *Achaia* himself, it is highly probable that they were to go thither also. Nevertheless, they are said only to have been sent into Macedonia, because Macedonia was in truth the country to which they went immediately from Ephesus; being directed, as we suppose, to proceed afterwards from thence into *Achaia*. If this be so, the narrative agrees with the epistle; and the agreement is attended with very little appearance of design. One thing at least concerning it is certain: that if this passage of St. Paul’s history had been taken from his letter, it would have sent Timothy to Corinth by name, or expressly however into *Achaia*.

But there is another circumstance in these two passages much less obvious, in which an agreement holds without any room for suspicion that it was produced by design. We have observed that the sending of Timothy into the peninsula of Greece was connected in the narrative with St. Paul’s own journey thither; it is stated as the effect of the same resolution. Paul purposed to go into Macedonia; “*so* he sent two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus.” Now in the epistle also you remark that, when the apostle mentions

his having sent Timothy unto them, in the very next sentence he speaks of his own visit: "for this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son," &c. "Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you; but I will come to you shortly, if God will." Timothy's journey, we see, is mentioned in the history and in the epistle, in close connexion with St. Paul's own. Here is the same order of thought and intention; yet conveyed under such diversity of circumstance and expression, and the mention of them in the epistle so allied to the occasion which introduces it, *viz.* the insinuation of his adversaries that he would come to Corinth no more, that I am persuaded no attentive reader will believe that these passages were written in concert with one another, or will doubt but that the agreement is unsought and uncontrived.

But, in the Acts, Erastus accompanied Timothy in this journey, of whom no mention is made in the epistle. From what has been said in our observations upon the Epistle to the Romans, it appears probable that Erastus was a Corinthian. If so, though he accompanied Timothy to Corinth, he was only returning home, and Timothy was the messenger charged with St. Paul's orders.—At any rate, this discrepancy shows that the passages were not taken from one another.

#### No. IV.

Chap. xvi. 10, 11.—"Now, if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do: let no man therefore despise him, but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me, for I look for him with the brethren."

From the passage considered in the preceding number, it appears that Timothy was sent to Corinth, either with the epistle, or before it: "for this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus." From the passage now quoted, we infer that Timothy was not sent *with* the epistle; for had he been the bearer of the letter, or accompanied it, would St. Paul in that letter have said, "*If* Timothy come?" Nor is the sequel consistent with the supposition of his carrying the letter; for if Timothy was with the apostle when he wrote the letter, could he say, as he does, "I look for him with the brethren?" I conclude therefore, that Timothy had left St. Paul to proceed upon his journey before the letter was written. Farther, the



passage before us seems to imply, that Timothy was not expected by St. Paul to arrive at Corinth till after they had received the letter. He gives them directions in the letter how to treat him when he should arrive: "If he come," act towards him so and so. Lastly, the whole form of expression is most naturally applicable to the supposition of Timothy's coming to Corinth, not directly from St. Paul, but from some other quarter; and that his instructions had been, when he should reach Corinth, to return. Now, how stands this matter in the history? Turn to the nineteenth chapter and twenty-first verse of the Acts, and you will find that Timothy did not, when sent from Ephesus, where he left St. Paul, and where the present epistle was written, proceed by a straight course to Corinth, but that he went round through Macedonia. This clears up every thing; for, although Timothy was sent forth upon his journey before the letter was written, yet he might not reach Corinth till after the letter arrived there; and he would come to Corinth, when he did come, not directly from St. Paul at Ephesus, but from some part of Macedonia. Here, therefore, is a circumstantial and critical agreement, and unquestionably without design; for neither of the two passages in the epistle mentions Timothy's journey into Macedonia at all, though nothing but a circuit of that kind can explain and reconcile the expressions which the writer uses.

#### No. V.

Chap. i. 12. "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ."

Also, iii. 6. "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

This expression, "I have planted, Apollos watered," imports two things: first, that Paul had been at Corinth before Apollos; secondly, that Apollos had been at Corinth after Paul, but before the writing of this epistle. This implied account of the several events, and of the order in which they took place, corresponds exactly with the history. St. Paul, after his first visit into Greece, returned from Corinth into Syria by the way of Ephesus; and, dropping his companions Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus, he proceeded forwards to Jerusalem; from Jerusalem he descended to Antioch; and from thence made a

progress through some of the upper or northern provinces of the Lesser Asia, Acts xviii. 19, 23: during which progress, and consequently in the interval between St. Paul's first and second visit to Corinth, and consequently also before the writing of this epistle, which was at Ephesus two years at least after the apostle's return from his progress, we hear of Apollos, and we hear of him at Corinth. Whilst St. Paul was engaged, as hath been said, in Phrygia and Galatia, Apollos came down to Ephesus; and being, in St. Paul's absence, instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, and having obtained letters of recommendation from the church at Ephesus, he passed over to Achaia; and when he was there, we read that he "helped them much which had believed through grace, for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly." Acts xviii. 27, 28. To have brought Apollos into Achaia, of which Corinth was the capital city, as well as the principal Christian church; and to have shown that he preached the Gospel in that country, would have been sufficient for our purpose. But the history happens also to mention Corinth by name, as the place in which Apollos, after his arrival in Achaia, fixed his residence: for, proceeding with the account of St. Paul's travels, it tells us, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came down to Ephesus, xix. 1. What is said therefore of Apollos in the epistle coincides exactly, and especially in the point of chronology, with what is delivered concerning him in the history. The only question now is, whether the allusions were made with a regard to this coincidence. Now, the occasions and purposes for which the name of Apollos is introduced in the Acts and in the Epistles are so independent and so remote, that it is impossible to discover the smallest reference from one to the other. Apollos is mentioned in the Acts, in immediate connexion with the history of Aquila and Priscilla, and for the very singular circumstance of his "knowing only the baptism of John." In the epistle, where none of these circumstances are taken notice of, his name first occurs, for the purpose of reproving the contentious spirit of the Corinthians; and it occurs only in conjunction with that of some others: "Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ." The second passage in which Apollos appears, "I have planted, Apollos watered," fixes, as we have observed, the order of time amongst three distinct

events: but it fixes this, I will venture to pronounce, without the writer perceiving that he was doing any such thing. The sentence fixes this order in exact conformity with the history; but it is itself introduced solely for the sake of the reflection which follows:—"Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

## No. VI.

Chap. iv. 11, 12. "Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands."

We are expressly told in the history, that at Corinth Saint Paul laboured with his own hands: "He found Aquila and Priscilla; and, because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought; for by their occupation they were tent-makers." But, in the text before us, he is made to say, that "he laboured *even unto the present hour*," that is, to the time of writing the epistle at Ephesus. Now, in the narration of Saint Paul's transactions at Ephesus, delivered in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts, nothing is said of his working with his own hands; but in the twentieth chapter we read, that upon his return from Greece, he sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus to meet him at Miletus; and in the discourse which he there addressed to them, amidst some other reflections which he calls to their remembrance, we find the following: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yea, you yourselves also know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." The reader will not forget to remark, that though Saint Paul be now at Miletus, it is to the elders of the church of Ephesus he is speaking, when he says, "Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities;" and that the whole discourse relates to his conduct during his last preceding residence at Ephesus. That manual labour, therefore, which he had exercised at Corinth, he continued at Ephesus; and not only so, but continued it during that particular residence at Ephesus, near the conclusion of which this epistle was written; so that he might with the strictest truth say at the time of writing the epistle, "*Even unto this present hour* we labour, working with our own hands." The correspondency is sufficient, then, as to the undesignedness of it. It



is manifest to my judgement, that if the history, in this article, had been taken from the epistle, this circumstance, if it appeared at all, would have appeared in its *place*, that is, in the direct account of Saint Paul's transactions at Ephesus. The correspondency would not have been effected, as it is, by a kind of reflected stroke, that is, by a reference in a subsequent speech, to what in the narrative was omitted. Nor is it likely, on the other hand, that a circumstance which is not extant in the history of Saint Paul at Ephesus should have been made the subject of a factitious allusion, in an epistle purporting to be written by him from that place; not to mention that the allusion itself, especially as to time, is too oblique and general to answer any purpose of forgery whatever.

## No. VII.

Chap. ix. 20. "And unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law."

We have the disposition here described, exemplified in two instances which the history records; one, Acts xvi. 3: "Him (Timothy) would Paul have to go forth with him, and took and circumcised him, *because of the Jews in those quarters*; for they knew all that his father was a Greek." This was before the writing of the epistle. The other, Acts xxi. 23, 26, and after the writing of the epistle: "Do this that we say to thee; we have four men which have a vow on them: them take, and purify thyself with them, that they may shave their heads; and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.—Then Paul took the men, and the next day, *purifying himself with them, entered into the temple*." Nor does this concurrence between the character and the instances look like the result of contrivance. Saint Paul, in the epistle, describes, or is made to describe, his own accommodating conduct towards Jews and towards Gentiles, towards the weak and over-scrupulous, towards men indeed of every variety of character; "to them that are without law as without law, being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law; to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men,

that I might gain some." This is the sequel of the text which stands at the head of the present number. Taking, therefore, the whole passage together, the apostle's condescension to the Jews is mentioned only as a part of his general disposition towards all. It is not probable that this character should have been made up from the instances in the Acts, which relate solely to his dealings with the Jews. It is not probable that a sophist should take his hint from those instances, and then extend it so much beyond them: and it is still more incredible that the two instances, in the Acts, circumstantially related and interwoven with the history, should have been fabricated in order to suit the character which Saint Paul gives of himself in the epistle.

### No. VIII.

Chap. i. 14—17. "I thank God that I baptised none of you but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I baptised in my own name; and I baptised also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptised any other; for Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel."

It may be expected that those whom the apostle baptised with his own hands, were converts distinguished from the rest by some circumstance, either of eminence, or of connexion with him. Accordingly, of the three names here mentioned, Crispus, we find, from Acts xviii. 8, was a "chief ruler of the Jewish synagogue at Corinth, who believed in the Lord, with all his house." Gaius, it appears from Romans xvi. 23, was Saint Paul's host at Corinth, and the host, he tells us, "of the whole church." The household of Stephanas, we read in the sixteenth chapter of this epistle, "were the first fruits of Achaia." Here therefore is the propriety we expected: and it is a proof of reality not to be contemned; for their names appearing in the several places in which they occur, with a mark of distinction belonging to each, could hardly be the effect of chance, without any truth to direct it: and on the other hand, to suppose that they were picked out from these passages, and brought together in the text before us, in order to display a conformity of names, is both improbable in itself, and is rendered more so by the purpose for which they are introduced. They come in to assist Saint Paul's exculpation of himself, against the possible charge of having as-

sumed the character of the founder of a separate religion, and with no other visible, or, as I think, imaginable design <sup>a</sup>.

## No. IX.

Chap. xvi. 11, 15. "Now, if Timotheus come, let no man despise him."—Why *despise* him? This charge is not given concerning any other messenger whom St. Paul sent; and, in the different epistles, many such messengers are mentioned. Turn to 1 Timothy, chap. iv. 12, and you will find that Timothy was a *young man*, younger probably than those who were usually employed in the Christian mission; and that St. Paul, apprehending lest he should, on that account, be exposed to contempt, urges upon him the caution which is there inserted, "Let no man despise thy youth."

<sup>a</sup> Chap. i. 1. "Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God, and Sosthenes, our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth." The only account we have of any person who bore the name of Sosthenes, is found in the eighteenth chapter of the Acts. When the Jews at Corinth had brought Paul before Gallio, and Gallio had dismissed their complaint as unworthy of his interference, and had driven them from the judgement-seat, "then all the Greeks," says the historian, "took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgement-seat." The Sosthenes here spoken of was a Corinthian; and, if he was a Christian, and with Saint Paul when he wrote this epistle, was likely enough to be joined with him in the salutation of the Corinthian church. But here occurs a difficulty. If Sosthenes was a Christian at the time of this uproar, why should the *Greeks* beat him? The assault upon the Christians was made by the *Jews*. It was the *Jews* who had brought Paul before the magistrate. If it had been the *Jews* also who had beaten Sosthenes, I should not have doubted but that he had been a favourer of Saint Paul, and the same person who is joined with him in the epistle. Let us see therefore whether there be not some error in our present text. The Alexandrian manuscript gives πάντες alone, without οἱ Ἕλληνες, and it is followed in this reading by the Coptic version, by the Arabian version, published by Erpenius, by the Vulgate, and by Bede's Latin version. The Greek manuscripts again, as well as Chrysostom, give οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, in the place of οἱ Ἕλληνες. A great plurality of manuscripts authorize the reading which is retained in our copies. In this variety it appears to me extremely probable that the historian originally wrote πάντες alone, and that οἱ Ἕλληνες and οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι have been respectively added as explanatory of what the word πάντες was supposed to mean. The sentence, without the addition of either name, would run very perspicuously thus, "καὶ ἀπέλασεν αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ βήματος" ἐπιλαβόμενοι δὲ πάντες Σωσθένην τὸν ἀρχισυναγωγόν, ἐτύπτον ἐμπροσθέν τοῦ βήματος. and he drove them away from the judgement-seat; and they all," viz. the crowd of Jews whom the judge had bid begone, "took Sosthenes, and beat him before the judgement-seat." It is certain that, as the whole body of the people were Greeks, the application of *all* to them was unusual and hard. If I was describing an insurrection at Paris, I might say *all* the Jews, *all* the Protestants, or *all* the English, acted so and so; but I should scarcely say *all* the French, when the whole mass of the community were of that description. As what is here offered is founded upon a various reading, and that in opposition to the greater part of the manuscripts that are extant, I have not given it a place in the text.



## No. X.

Chap. xvi. 1. "Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye."

The churches of Galatia and Phrygia were the last churches which St. Paul had visited before the writing of this epistle. He was now at Ephesus, and he came thither immediately from visiting these churches: "He went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia, in order, strengthening all the disciples. And it came to pass that Paul, having passed through the upper coasts," (viz. the above-named countries, called the upper coasts, as being the northern part of Asia Minor,) "came to Ephesus." Acts xviii. 23; xix. 1. These therefore, probably, were the last churches at which he left directions for their public conduct during his absence. Although two years intervened between his journey to Ephesus and his writing this epistle, yet it does not appear that during that time he visited any other church. That he had not been silent, when he was in Galatia, upon this subject of contribution for the poor, is farther made out from a hint which he lets fall in his epistle to that church: "Only they (viz. the other apostles) would that we should remember the poor, the same also which I was forward to do."

## No. XI.

Chap. iv. 18. "Now, some are puffed up, as though I would not come unto you."

Why should they suppose that he would not come? Turn to the first chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and you will find that he had already *disappointed* them: "I was minded to come unto you before, that you might have a second benefit; and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea. When I, therefore, was thus minded, did I use lightness? Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay? But, as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay." It appears from this quotation, that he had not only intended, but that he had promised them a visit before; for, otherwise, why should he apologise for the change of his purpose, or express so much anxiety lest this change should be imputed to any culpable fickleness in his temper; and lest he

should thereby seem to them as one whose word was not, in any sort, to be depended upon? Besides which, the terms made use of plainly refer to a promise, "Our *word toward you* was not yea and nay." St. Paul therefore had signified an intention which he had not been able to execute; and this seeming breach of his word, and the delay of his visit, had, with some who were evil affected towards him, given birth to a suggestion that he would come no more to Corinth.

## No. XII.

Chap. v. 7, 8. "For even Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Dr. Benson tells us, that from this passage, compared with chapter xvi. 8, it has been conjectured that this epistle was written about the time of the Jewish passover; and to me the conjecture appears to be very well founded. The passage to which Dr. Benson refers us is this: "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost." With this passage he ought to have joined another in the same context: "and it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you;" for from the two passages laid together, it follows that the epistle was written before Pentecost, yet after winter; which necessarily determines the date to the part of the year within which the passover falls. It was written before Pentecost, because he says, "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost." It was written after winter, because he tells them, "It may be that I may abide, yea, and winter with you." The winter which the apostle purposed to pass at Corinth, was undoubtedly the winter next ensuing to the date of the epistle; yet it was a winter subsequent to the ensuing Pentecost, because he did not intend to set forwards upon his journey, till after that feast. The words, "let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," look very like words suggested by the season; at least they have, upon that supposition, a force and significancy which do not belong to them upon any other; and it is not a little remarkable, that the hints casually dropped in the epistle concerning particular parts of the year should coincide with this supposition.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

## No. I.

I WILL not say that it is impossible, having seen the First Epistle to the Corinthians, to construct a second with ostensible allusions to the first; or that it is impossible that both should be fabricated, so as to carry on an order and continuation of story, by successive references to the same events. But I say, that this, in either case, must be the effect of craft and design. Whereas, whoever examines the allusions to the former epistle which he finds in this, whilst he will acknowledge them to be such as would rise spontaneously to the hand of the writer, from the very subject of the correspondence, and the situation of the corresponding parties, supposing these to be real, will see no particle of reason to suspect, either that the clauses containing these allusions were *insertions* for the purpose, or that the several transactions of the Corinthian church were feigned, in order to form a train of narrative, or to support the appearance of connexion between the two epistles.

1. In the First Epistle, St. Paul announces his intention of passing through Macedonia, in his way to Corinth: "I will come to you when I shall pass through Macedonia." In the Second Epistle, we find him arrived in Macedonia, and about to pursue his journey to Corinth. But observe the manner in which this is made to appear: "I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago, and your zeal hath provoked very many: yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready; lest, haply, if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not you) be ashamed in this same confident boasting." (Chap. ix. 2, 3, 4.) St. Paul's being in Macedonia at the time of writing the epistle is, in this passage, inferred only from his saying that he had boasted to the Macedonians of the alacrity of his Achaian converts; and the fear which he expresses, lest, if any of the Macedonian Christians should come with him unto Achaia, they should find his boasting unwarranted by the event. The business of the



contribution is the sole cause of mentioning Macedonia at all. Will it be insinuated that this passage was framed merely to state that St. Paul was now in Macedonia; and, by that statement, to produce an apparent agreement with the purpose of visiting Macedonia, notified in the First Epistle? Or will it be thought probable, that, if a sophist had meant to place St. Paul in Macedonia, for the sake of giving countenance to his forgery, he would have done it in so oblique a manner as through the medium of a contribution? The same thing may be observed of another text in the epistle, in which the name of Macedonia occurs: "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach the Gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus, my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia." I mean, that it may be observed of this passage also, that there is a reason for mentioning Macedonia, entirely distinct from the purpose of showing St. Paul to be *there*. Indeed, if the passage before us show that point at all, it shows it so obscurely, that Grotius, though he did not doubt that Paul was now in Macedonia, refers this text to a different journey. Is this the hand of a forger, meditating to establish a false conformity? The text, however, in which it is most strongly implied that St. Paul wrote the present epistle from Macedonia, is found in the fourth, fifth, and sixth verses of the seventh chapter: "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation; for, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest; without were fightings, within were fears: nevertheless, God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus." Yet even here, I think, no one will contend that St. Paul's coming to Macedonia, or being in Macedonia, was the principal thing intended to be told: or that the telling of it, indeed, was any part of the intention with which the text was written; or that the mention even of the name of Macedonia was not purely incidental, in the description of those tumultuous sorrows with which the writer's mind had been lately agitated, and from which he was relieved by the coming of Titus. The first five verses of the eighth chapter, which commend the liberality of the Macedonian churches, do not, in my opinion, by themselves, prove St. Paul to have been at Macedonia at the time of writing the epistle.

2. In the First Epistle, St Paul denounces a severe censure against an incestuous marriage, which had taken place amongst

the Corinthian converts, with the connivance, not to say with the approbation, of the church; and enjoins the church to purge itself of this scandal, by expelling the offender from its society: "It is reported commonly, that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named amongst the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife; and ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you; for I, verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present concerning him that hath done this deed; in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, in my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." (Chap. v. 1—5.) In the Second Epistle, we find this sentence executed, and the offender to be so affected with the punishment, that St. Paul now intercedes for his restoration; "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many; so that, contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with over-much sorrow; wherefore, I beseech you, that ye would confirm your love towards him." (2 Cor. chap. ii. 7, 8.) Is this whole business feigned for the sake of carrying on a continuation of story through the two epistles? The church also, no less than the offender, was brought by St. Paul's reproof to a deep sense of the impropriety of their conduct. Their penitence, and their respect to his authority, were, as might be expected, exceeding grateful to St. Paul: "We were comforted not by Titus's coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind towards me, so that I rejoiced the more; for, though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing." (Chap. vii. 7—9.) That this passage is to be referred to the incestuous marriage is proved by the twelfth verse of the same chapter: "though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong; but that our care for you, in the sight of God, might appear unto

you." There were, it is true, various topics of blame noticed in the First Epistle; but there was none, except this of the incestuous marriage, which could be called a transaction between private parties, or of which it could be said that one particular person had "done the wrong," and another particular person "had suffered it." Could all this be without foundation? or could it be put into the Second Epistle, merely to furnish an obscure sequel to what had been said about an incestuous marriage in the first?

3. In the sixteenth chapter of the First Epistle, a collection for the saints is recommended to be set forwards at Corinth: "Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, so do ye." (Chap. xvi. 1.) In the ninth chapter of the Second Epistle, such a collection is spoken of, as in readiness to be received: "As touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you, for I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago, and your zeal hath provoked very many." (Chap. ix. 1, 2.) This is such a continuation of the transaction as might be expected; or possibly it will be said, as might easily be counterfeited; but there is a circumstance of nicety in the agreement between the two epistles, which, I am convinced, the author of a forgery would not have hit upon, or which, if he had hit upon it, he would have set forth with more clearness. The Second Epistle speaks of the Corinthians as having begun this eleemosynary business a year before: "This is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago." (Chap. viii. 10.) "I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago." (Chap. ix. 2.) From these texts it is evident, that something had been done in the business a year before. It appears, however, from other texts in the epistle, that the contribution was not yet collected or paid; for brethren were sent from St. Paul to Corinth, "to make up their bounty." (Chap. ix. 5.) They are urged to "perform the doing of it." (Chap. viii. 11.) "And every man was exhorted to give as he purposed in his heart." (Chap. ix. 7.) The contribution, therefore, as represented in our present epistle, was in readiness, yet not received from the contributors; was begun, was forward long before, yet not hitherto collected. Now this representation agrees with one, and only with one, supposition, namely, that every man had laid by in store, had already pro-



vided the fund, from which he was afterwards to contribute—the very case which the First Epistle authorizes us to suppose to have existed; for in that epistle St. Paul had charged the Corinthians, “upon the first day of the week, every one of them, to lay by in store as God had prospered him.”<sup>a</sup> (1 Cor. chap. xvi. 2.)

## No. II.

In comparing the Second Epistle to the Corinthians with the Acts of the Apostles, we are soon brought to observe, not only that there exists no vestige either of the epistle having been taken from the history, or the history from the epistle; but also that there appears in the contents of the epistle positive evidences that neither was borrowed from the other. Titus, who bears a conspicuous part in the epistle, is not mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles at all. St. Paul’s sufferings enumerated, chap. xi. 24, “of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep,” cannot be made out from his history as delivered in the Acts; nor would this account have been given by a writer, who either drew his knowledge of St. Paul from that history, or

<sup>a</sup> The following observations will satisfy us concerning the purity of our apostle’s conduct in the suspicious business of a pecuniary contribution.

1. He disclaims the having received any inspired authority for the directions which he is giving: “I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.” (2 Cor. chap. viii. 8.) Who, that had a sinister purpose to answer by the recommending of subscriptions, would thus distinguish, and thus lower the credit of his own recommendation?

2. Although he asserts the general right of Christian ministers to a maintenance from their ministry, yet he protests against the making use of this right in his own person: “Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel; but I have used none of these things, neither have I written these things that it should be so done unto me; for it were better for me to die than that any man should make my glorying, i. e. my professions of disinterestedness, void.” (1 Cor. chap. ix. 14, 15.)

3. He repeatedly proposes that there should be associates with himself in the management of the public bounty; not colleagues of his own appointment, but persons elected for that purpose by the contributors themselves. “And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem; and if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.” (1 Cor. chap. xvi. 3, 4.) And in the Second Epistle, what is here proposed, we find actually done, and done for the very purpose of guarding his character against any imputation that might be brought upon it, in the discharge of a pecuniary trust: “And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches; and not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace (gift) which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and the declaration of your ready mind: avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us; providing for things honest, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men:” i. e. not resting in the consciousness of our own integrity, but, in such a subject, careful also to approve our integrity to the public judgment. (2 Cor. chap. viii. 18—21.)

who was careful to preserve a conformity with it. The account in the epistle of St. Paul's escape from Damascus, though agreeing in the main fact with the account of the same transaction in the Acts, is related with such difference of circumstance, as renders it utterly improbable that one should be derived from the other. The two accounts, placed by the side of each other, stand as follows :

2 Cor. chap. xi. 32, 33. In Damascus, the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend *me*; and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

Acts, chap. ix. 23—25. And after many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him; but their laying in wait was known of Saul, and they watched the gates day and night to kill him: then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

Now if we be satisfied in general concerning these two ancient writings, that the one was not known to the writer of the other, or not consulted by him; then the accordances which may be pointed out between them will admit of no solution so probable, as the attributing of them to truth and reality, as to their common foundation.

### No. III.

The opening of this epistle exhibits a connexion with the history which alone would satisfy my mind that the epistle was written by St. Paul, and by St. Paul in the situation in which the history places him. Let it be remembered, that in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts, St. Paul is represented as driven away from Ephesus, or as leaving however Ephesus, in consequence of an uproar in that city, excited by some interested adversaries of the new religion. The account of the tumult is as follows: "When they heard these sayings," viz. Demetrius's complaint of the danger to be apprehended from St. Paul's ministry to the established worship of the Ephesian goddess, "they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion; and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre; and when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not; and certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. Some, therefore, cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused, and the more

part knew not wherefore they were come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward; and Alexander beckoned with his hand, and would have made his defence unto the people: but, when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice, about the space of two hours, cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.—And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.” When he was arrived in Macedonia, he wrote the Second Epistle to the Corinthians which is now before us; and he begins his epistle in this wise: “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For, as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ; and whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings, which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation: and our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that, as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble *which came to us in Asia*, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.” Nothing could be more expressive of the circumstances in which the history describes St. Paul to have been, at the time when the epistle purports to be written; or rather, nothing could be more expressive of the sensations arising from these circumstances, than this passage. It is the calm recollection of a mind emerged from the confusion of instant danger. It is that devotion and solemnity of thought, which follows a recent deliverance. There is just enough of particularity in the passage to show that it is to be referred to the tumult at Ephesus: “We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble *which came to us in Asia*.” And there is nothing more; no mention of Demetrius, of the seizure of St. Paul’s friends, of the interference of the town-clerk, of the occasion or nature of the danger which St. Paul had escaped, or even of the city where it



happened; in a word, no recital from which a suspicion could be conceived, either that the author of the epistle had made use of the narrative in the Acts; or, on the other hand, that he had sketched the outline, which the narrative in the Acts only filled up. That the forger of an epistle, under the name of St. Paul, should borrow circumstances from a history of St. Paul then extant; or, that the author of a history of St. Paul should gather materials from letters bearing St. Paul's name, may be credited; but I cannot believe that any forger whatever should fall upon an expedient so refined, as to exhibit sentiments adapted to a situation, and to leave his readers to seek out that situation from the history; still less that the author of a history should go about to frame facts and circumstances, fitted to supply the sentiments which he found in the letter. It may be said, perhaps, that it does not appear from the history that any danger threatened St. Paul's life in the uproar at Ephesus, so imminent as that from which in the epistle he represents himself to have been delivered. This matter, it is true, is not stated by the historian in form; but the personal danger of the apostle, we cannot doubt, must have been extreme, when the "whole city was filled with confusion;" when the populace had "seized his companions;" when, in the distraction of his mind, he insisted upon "coming forth amongst them;" when the Christians who were about him "would not suffer him;" when "his friends, certain of the chief of Asia, sent to him, desiring that he would not adventure himself in the tumult;" when, lastly, he was obliged to quit immediately the place and the country, "and when the tumult was ceased, to depart into Macedonia." All which particulars are found in the narration, and justify St. Paul's own account, "that he was pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that he despaired even of life; that he had the sentence of death in himself;" *i. e.* that he looked upon himself as a man condemned to die.

#### No. IV.

It has already been remarked, that St. Paul's original intention was to have visited Corinth in his way to Macedonia: "I was minded to come unto you before, and to pass by you into Macedonia." 2 Cor. chap. i. 15, 16. It has also been remarked that he changed his intention, and ultimately resolved upon going through Macedonia *first*. Now upon this head there

exists a circumstance of correspondency between our epistle and the history, which is not very obvious to the reader's observation; but which, when observed, will be found, I think, close and exact. Which circumstance is this: that though the change of St. Paul's intention be expressly mentioned only in the second epistle, yet it appears, both from the history and from this second epistle, that the change had taken place before the writing of the first epistle; that it appears however from neither, otherwise than by an inference, unnoticed perhaps by almost every one who does not sit down professedly to the examination.

First, then, how does this point appear from the history? In the nineteenth chapter of the Acts, and the twenty-first verse, we are told, that "Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem. So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season." A short time after this, and evidently in pursuance of the same intention, we find (chap. xx. 1, 2) that "Paul departed from Ephesus for to go into Macedonia: and that, when he had gone over those parts, he came into Greece." The resolution therefore of passing first through Macedonia, and from thence into Greece, was formed by St. Paul, previously to the sending away of Timothy. The order in which the two countries are mentioned shows the direction of his intended route, "when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia." Timothy and Erastus, who were to precede him in his progress, were sent by him from Ephesus into Macedonia. He himself a short time afterwards, and, as hath been observed, evidently in continuation and pursuance of the same design, "departed for to go into Macedonia." If he had ever, therefore, entertained a different plan of his journey, which is not hinted in the history, he must have changed that plan before this time. But, from the 17th verse of the fourth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, we discover, that Timothy had been sent away from Ephesus before that Epistle was written: "For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son." The change therefore of St. Paul's resolution, which was prior to the sending away of Timothy, was necessarily prior to the writing of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

Thus stands the order of dates, as collected from the history, compared with the First Epistle. Now let us inquire, secondly,

how this matter is represented in the epistle before us. In the sixteenth verse of the first chapter of this epistle, St. Paul speaks of the intention which he had once entertained of visiting Achaia, in his way to Macedonia: "In this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit: and to pass by you into Macedonia." After protesting, in the seventeenth verse, against any evil construction that might be put upon his laying aside of this intention, in the twenty-third verse he discloses the cause of it: "Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that, to spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth." And then he proceeds as follows: "But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness: for, if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? *And I wrote this same unto you*, lest when I came I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all; for, out of much affliction and anguish of heart, *I wrote unto you with many tears*; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you; but if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me but in part, that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many." In this quotation, let the reader first direct his attention to the clause marked by Italics, "*and I wrote this same unto you*," and let him consider, whether, from the context, and from the structure of the whole passage, it be not evident that this writing was after St. Paul had "determined with himself, that he would not come again to them in heaviness?" whether, indeed, it was not in consequence of this determination, or at least with this determination upon his mind? And, in the next place, let him consider, whether the sentence, "I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness," do not plainly refer to that postponing of his visit, to which he had alluded in the verse but one before, when he said, "I call God for a record upon my soul, that, to spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth:" and whether this be not the visit of which he speaks in the sixteenth verse, wherein he informs the Corinthians, "that he had been minded to pass by them into Macedonia;" but that, for reasons which argued no levity or fickleness in his disposition, he had been compelled to change his purpose. If



this be so, then it follows that the writing here mentioned was posterior to the change of his intention. The only question, therefore, that remains, will be, whether this writing relate to the letter which we now have under the title of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, or to some other letter not extant? And upon this question I think Mr. Locke's observation decisive; namely, that the second clause marked in the quotation by Italics, "I wrote unto you with many tears," and the first clause so marked, "I wrote this same unto you," belong to one writing, whatever that was; and that the second clause goes on to advert to a circumstance which is found in our present First Epistle to the Corinthians; namely, the case and punishment of the incestuous person. Upon the whole, then, we see that it is capable of being inferred from St. Paul's own words, in the long extract which we have quoted, that the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written after St. Paul had determined to postpone his journey to Corinth; in other words, that the change of his purpose with respect to the course of his journey, though expressly mentioned only in the Second Epistle, had taken place before the writing of the First; the point which we made out to be implied in the history, by the order of the events there recorded, and the allusions to those events in the First Epistle. Now this is a species of congruity of all others the most to be relied upon. It is not an agreement between two accounts of the same transaction, or between different statements of the same fact, for the fact is not stated; nothing that can be called an account is given; but it is the junction of two conclusions, deduced from independent sources, and deducible only by investigation and comparison.

This point, viz. the change of the route, being prior to the writing of the First Epistle, also falls in with, and accounts for, the manner in which he speaks in that epistle of his journey. His first intention had been, as he declares, to "pass by them into Macedonia:" that intention having been previously given up, he writes, in his First Epistle, "that he would not see them now by the way," *i. e.* as he must have done upon his first plan; but "that he trusted to tarry awhile with them, and possibly to abide, yea and winter with them." 1 Cor. chap. xvi. 5, 6. It also accounts for a singularity in the text referred to, which must strike every reader: "I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia; for I do pass through Macedonia." The supplemental sentence, "for I do pass

through Macedonia," imports that there had been some previous communication upon the subject of the journey; and also that there had been some vacillation and indecisiveness in the apostle's plan: both which we now perceive to have been the case. The sentence is as much as to say, "This is what I at last resolve upon." The expression "*ὅταν Μακεδονίαν διελθῶ*," is ambiguous; it may denote either "when I pass," or "when I shall have passed, through Macedonia:" the considerations offered above fix it to the latter sense. Lastly, the point we have endeavoured to make out confirms, or rather, indeed, is necessary to the support of a conjecture, which forms the subject of a number in our observations, upon the First Epistle, that the insinuation of certain of the church of Corinth, that he would come no more amongst them, was founded on some previous disappointment of their expectations.

## No. V.

But if St. Paul had changed his purpose before the writing of the First Epistle, why did he defer explaining himself to the Corinthians, concerning the reason of that change, until he wrote the Second? This is a very fair question; and we are able, I think, to return to it a satisfactory answer. The real cause, and the cause at length assigned by St. Paul for postponing his visit to Corinth, and not travelling by the route which he had at first designed, was the disorderly state of the Corinthian church at the time, and the painful severities which he should have found himself obliged to exercise, if he had come amongst them during the existence of these irregularities. He was willing therefore to try, before he came in person, what a letter of authoritative objurgation would do amongst them, and to leave time for the operation of the experiment. That was his scheme in writing the First Epistle. But it was not for him to acquaint them with the scheme. After the epistle had produced its effect, (and to the utmost extent, as it should seem, of the apostle's hopes;) when he had wrought in them a deep sense of their fault, and an almost passionate solicitude to restore themselves to the approbation of their teacher; when Titus (chap. vii. 6, 7, 11,) had brought him intelligence "of their earnest desire, their mourning, their fervent mind towards him, of their sorrow and their penitence; what carefulness, what clearing of themselves, what indignation,

what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what revenge," his letter, and the general concern occasioned by it, had excited amongst them; he then opens himself fully upon the subject. The affectionate mind of the apostle is touched by this return of zeal and duty. He tells them that he did not visit them at the time proposed, lest their meeting should have been attended with mutual grief; and with grief to him imbittered by the reflection, that he was giving pain to those from whom alone he could receive comfort: "I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness; for, if I make you sorry, who is he that maketh me glad but the same which is made sorry by me?" (chap. ii. 1, 2): that he had written his former epistle to warn them beforehand of their fault, "lest when he came he should have sorrow of them of whom he ought to rejoice" (chap. ii. 3): that he had the farther view, though perhaps unperceived by them, of making an experiment of their fidelity, "to know the proof of them, whether they are obedient in all things" (chap. ii. 9). This full discovery of his motive came very naturally from the apostle, after he had seen the success of his measures, but would not have been a seasonable communication before. The whole composes a train of sentiment and of conduct resulting from real situation, and from real circumstance, and as remote as possible from fiction or imposture.

#### No. VI.

Chap. xi. 9. "When I was present with you and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied." The principal fact set forth in this passage, the arrival at Corinth of brethren from Macedonia during St. Paul's first residence in that city, is explicitly recorded, Acts, chap. xviii. 1, 5. "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ."

#### No. VII.

The above quotation from the Acts proves that Silas and Timotheus were assisting to St. Paul in preaching the Gospel at



Corinth. With which correspond the words of the epistle (chap. i. 19): "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea." I do admit that the correspondency, considered by itself, is too direct and obvious; and that an impostor with the history before him might, and probably would, produce agreements of the same kind. But let it be remembered, that this reference is found in a writing, which from many discrepancies, and especially from those noted No. II., we may conclude, was not composed by any one who had consulted, and who pursued, the history. Some observation also arises upon the variation of the name. We read Silas in the Acts, Silvanus in the epistle. The similitude of these two names, if they were the names of different persons, is greater than could easily have proceeded from accident; I mean that it is not probable, that two persons placed in situations so much alike should bear names so nearly resembling each other<sup>a</sup>. On the other hand, the difference of the name in the two passages negatives the supposition of the passages, or the account contained in them, being transcribed either from the other.

#### No. VIII.

Chap. ii. 12, 13. "When I came to Troas to preach Christ's Gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia."

To establish a conformity between this passage and the history, nothing more is necessary to be presumed, than that Saint Paul proceeded from Ephesus to Macedonia, upon the same course by which he came back from Macedonia to Ephesus, or rather to Miletus in the neighbourhood of Ephesus; in other words, that in his journey to the peninsula of Greece, he went and returned the same way. St. Paul is now in Macedonia, where he had lately arrived from Ephesus. Our quotation imports that in his journey he had stopped at Troas. Of this the history says nothing, leaving us only the short account, that "Paul departed from Ephesus, for to go into Macedonia." But the history says, that in his *return* from Macedonia to Ephesus,

<sup>a</sup> That they were the same person is farther confirmed by 1 Thess. chap. i. 1, compared with Acts, chap. xvii. 10.

“Paul sailed from Philippi to *Troas*; and that, when the disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread, Paul preached unto them all night; that from *Troas* he went by land to *Assos*; from *Assos*, taking ship and coasting along the front of *Asia Minor*, he came by *Mitylene* to *Miletus*.” Which account proves, first, that *Troas* lay in the way by which Saint Paul passed between *Ephesus* and *Macedonia*; secondly, that he had disciples there. In one journey between these two places, the epistle, and in another journey between the same places, the history, makes him stop at this city. Of the first journey he is made to say, “that a door was in that city opened unto me of the Lord;” in the second we find disciples there collected around him, and the apostle exercising his ministry, with, what was even in him, more than ordinary zeal and labour. The epistle, therefore, is in this instance confirmed, if not by the terms, at least by the probability, of the history; a species of confirmation by no means to be despised, because, as far as it reaches, it is evidently uncontrived.

Grotius, I know, refers the arrival at *Troas*, to which the epistle alludes, to a different period, but I think very improbably; for nothing appears to me more certain, than that the meeting with Titus, which St. Paul expected at *Troas*, was the same meeting which took place in *Macedonia*, viz. upon Titus's coming out of Greece. In the quotation before us, he tells the Corinthians, “When I came to *Troas*, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but, taking my leave of them, I went from thence into *Macedonia*.” Then in the seventh chapter he writes, “When we were come into *Macedonia*, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears; nevertheless God, that comforteth them that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus.” These two passages plainly relate to the same journey of Titus, in meeting with whom St. Paul had been disappointed at *Troas*, and rejoiced in *Macedonia*. And amongst other reasons which fix the former passage to the coming of Titus out of Greece, is the consideration, that it was nothing to the Corinthians that St. Paul did not meet with Titus at *Troas*, were it not that he was to bring intelligence from Corinth. The mention of the disappointment in this place, upon any other supposition, is irrelative.

## No. IX.

Chap. xi. 24, 25. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep."

These particulars cannot be extracted out of the Acts of the Apostles; which proves, as hath been already observed, that the epistle was not framed from the history: yet they are consistent with it, which, considering how numerically circumstantial the account is, is more than could happen to arbitrary and independent fictions. When I say that these particulars are *consistent* with the history, I mean, first, that there is no article in the enumeration which is contradicted by the history: secondly, that the history, though silent with respect to many of the facts here enumerated, has left space for the existence of these facts, consistent with the fidelity of its own narration.

First, no contradiction is discoverable between the epistle and the history. When St. Paul says, *thrice* was I beaten with rods, although the history record only *one* beating with rods, viz. at Philippi, Acts xvi. 22, yet is there no contradiction. It is only the omission in one book of what is related in another. But had the history contained accounts of *four* beatings with rods, at the time of writing this epistle, in which St. Paul says that he had only suffered three, there would have been a contradiction properly so called. The same observation applies generally to the other parts of the enumeration, concerning which the history is silent: but there is one clause in the quotation particularly deserving of remark; because, when confronted with the history, it furnishes the nearest approach to a contradiction, without a contradiction being actually incurred, of any I remember to have met with. "Once," saith St. Paul, "was I stoned." Does the history relate that St. Paul, prior to the writing of this epistle, had been stoned more than once? The history mentions distinctly one occasion upon which St. Paul was stoned, viz. at Lystra in Lycaonia. "Then came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people; and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead." (Chap. xiv. 19.) And it mentions also another occasion in which "an assault was made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully and to stone them; but they were aware of it," the history proceeds



to tell us, "and fled into Lystra and Derbe." This happened at Iconium, prior to the date of the epistle. Now, had the assault been completed; had the history related that a stone was thrown, as it relates that preparations were made both by Jews and Gentiles to stone Paul and his companions; or even had the account of this transaction stopped, without going on to inform us that Paul and his companions were "aware of their danger and fled," a contradiction between the history and the epistle would have ensued. Truth is necessarily consistent: but it is scarcely possible that independent accounts, not having truth to guide them, should thus advance to the very brink of contradiction without falling into it.

Secondly, I say, that if the Acts of the Apostles be silent concerning many of the instances enumerated in the epistle, this silence may be accounted for from the plan and fabric of the history. The date of the epistle synchronises with the beginning of the twentieth chapter of the Acts. The part, therefore, of the history, which precedes the twentieth chapter, is the only part in which can be found any notice of the persecutions to which St. Paul refers. Now it does not appear that the author of the history was with St. Paul until his departure from Troas, on his way to Macedonia, as related chap. xvi. 10; or rather indeed the contrary appears. It is in this point of the history that the language changes. In the seventh and eighth verses of this chapter the third person is used: "After *they* were come to Mysia, *they* assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not; and *they* passing by Mysia came to Troas:" and the third person is in like manner constantly used throughout the foregoing part of the history. In the tenth verse of this chapter, the first person comes in: "After Paul had seen the vision, immediately *we* endeavoured to go into Macedonia: assuredly gathering that the Lord had called *us* to preach the Gospel unto them." Now, from this time to the writing of the epistle, the history occupies four chapters; yet it is in these, if in any, that a regular or continued account of the apostle's life is to be expected; for how succinctly his history is delivered in the preceding part of the book, that is to say, from the time of his conversion to the time when the historian joined him at Troas, except the particulars of his conversion itself, which are related circumstantially, may be understood from the following observations:

The history of a period of sixteen years is comprised in less

than three chapters ; and of these, a material part is taken up with discourses. After his conversion, he continued in the neighbourhood of Damascus, according to the history, for a certain considerable, though indefinite, length of time, according to his own words (Gal. i. 18.) for three years ; of which no other account is given than this short one, that “straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God ; that all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem ? that he increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus ; and that after many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him.” From Damascus he proceeded to Jerusalem : and of his residence there nothing more particular is recorded, than that “he was with the apostles, coming in and going out ; that he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians, who went about to kill him.” From Jerusalem, the history sends him to his native city of Tarsus<sup>a</sup>. It seems probable, from the order and disposition of the history, that Saint Paul’s stay at Tarsus was of some continuance ; for we hear nothing of him until, after a long apparent interval, and much interjacent narrative, Barnabas, desirous of Paul’s assistance upon the enlargement of the Christian mission, “Went to Tarsus for to seek him.”<sup>b</sup> We cannot doubt but that the new apostle had been busied in his ministry ; yet of what he did, or what he suffered, during this period, which may include three or four years, the history professes not to deliver any information. As Tarsus was situated upon the sea-coast, and as, though Tarsus was his home, yet it is probable he visited from thence many other places, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, it is not unlikely, that in the course of three or four years he might undertake many short voyages to neighbouring countries, in the navigating of which we may be allowed to suppose that some of those disasters and shipwrecks befell him to which he refers in the quotation before us, “thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep.” This last clause I am inclined to interpret of his being obliged to take to an open boat, upon the loss of the ship, and his continuing out at sea in that dangerous situation, a night and a day. Saint Paul is here recounting his sufferings, not relating miracles. From Tarsus, Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch, and there he remained a year : but of the transactions of

<sup>a</sup> Acts, chap. ix. 30.<sup>b</sup> Chap. xi. 25.

that year no other description is given than what is contained in the last four verses of the eleventh chapter. After a more solemn dedication to the ministry, Barnabas and Paul proceeded from Antioch to Cilicia, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus, of which voyage no particulars are mentioned. Upon their return from Cyprus, they made a progress together through the Lesser Asia; and though two remarkable speeches be preserved, and a few incidents in the course of their travels circumstantially related, yet is the account of this progress, upon the whole, given professedly with conciseness; for instance, at Iconium it is said that they abode a long time<sup>a</sup>; yet of this long abode, except concerning the manner in which they were driven away, no memoir is inserted in the history. The whole is wrapped up in one short summary, "They spake boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." Having completed their progress, the two apostles returned to Antioch, "and there they abode a long time with the disciples." Here we have another large portion of time passed over in silence. To this succeeded a journey to Jerusalem, upon a dispute which then much agitated the Christian church, concerning the obligation of the law of Moses. When the object of that journey was completed, Paul proposed to Barnabas to go again and visit their brethren in every city where they had preached the word of the Lord. The execution of this plan carried our apostle through Syria, Cilicia, and many provinces of the Lesser Asia; yet is the account of the whole journey dispatched in four verses of the sixteenth chapter.

If the Acts of the Apostles had undertaken to exhibit regular annals of Saint Paul's ministry, or even any continued account of his life, from his conversion at Damascus to his imprisonment at Rome, I should have thought the omission of the circumstances referred to in our epistle a matter of reasonable objection. But when it appears, from the history itself, that large portions of Saint Paul's life were either passed over in silence, or only slightly touched upon, and that nothing more than certain detached incidents and discourses is related; when we observe, also, that the author of the history did not join our apostle's society till a few years before the writing of the epistle, at least that there is no proof in the history that he did so; in comparing the history with the epistle, we shall not be surprised by

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xiv. 3.



the discovery of omissions; we shall ascribe it to truth that there is no contradiction.

## No. X.

Chap. iii. 1. "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you?"

"As some others." Turn to Acts xviii. 27, and you will find that, a short time before the writing of this epistle, Apollos had gone to Corinth with letters of commendation from the Ephesian Christians; "and when Apollos was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him." Here the words of the epistle bear the appearance of alluding to some specific instance, and the history supplies that instance; it supplies at least an instance as apposite as possible to the terms which the apostle uses, and to the date and direction of the epistle in which they are found. The letter which Apollos carried from Ephesus was precisely the letter of commendation which Saint Paul meant; and it was to Achaia, of which Corinth was the capital, and indeed to Corinth itself, (Acts, chap. xix. 1,) that Apollos carried it; and it was about two years before the writing of this epistle. If Saint Paul's words be rather thought to refer to some general usage which then obtained among Christian churches, the case of Apollos exemplifies that usage; and affords that species of confirmation to the epistle, which arises from seeing the manners of the age, in which it purports to be written, faithfully preserved.

## No. XI.

Chap. xiii. 1. "This is the third time I am coming to you:"  
*τρίτον τουτο ερχομαι.*

Do not these words import that the writer had been at Corinth twice before? Yet, if they import this, they upset every congruity we have been endeavouring to establish. The Acts of the Apostles record only two journeys of Saint Paul to Corinth. We have all along supposed, what every mark of time except this expression indicates, that this epistle was written between the first and second of these journeys. If Saint Paul had been already twice at Corinth, this supposition must be given up: and every argument or observation which depends upon it falls to the ground. Again, the Acts of the Apostles not only record no more than two journeys of Saint Paul to Corinth,

but do not allow us to suppose that more than two such journeys could be made or intended by him within the period which the history comprises ; for from his first journey into Greece to his first imprisonment at Rome, with which the history concludes, the apostle's time is accounted for. If therefore the epistle was written after the second journey to Corinth, and upon the view and expectation of a third, it must have been written after his first imprisonment at Rome, *i. e.* after the time to which the history extends. When I first read over this epistle with the particular view of comparing it with the history, which I chose to do without consulting any commentary whatever, I own that I felt myself confounded by this text. It appeared to contradict the opinion, which I had been led by a great variety of circumstances to form, concerning the date and occasion of the epistle. At length, however, it occurred to my thoughts to inquire, whether the passage did necessarily imply that Saint Paul had been at Corinth twice ; or, whether, when he says, "this is the third time I am coming to you," he might mean only that this was the third time that he was ready, that he was prepared, that he intended to set out upon his journey to Corinth. I recollected that he had once before this purposed to visit Corinth, and had been disappointed in this purpose ; which disappointment forms the subject of much apology and protestation, in the first and second chapters of the epistle. Now, if the journey in which he had been disappointed was reckoned by him one of the times in which "he was coming to them," then the present would be the third time, *i. e.* of his being ready and prepared to come ; although he had been actually at Corinth only *once* before. This conjecture being taken up, a farther examination of the passage and the epistle produced proofs which placed it beyond doubt. "This is the third time I am coming to you:" in the verse following these words he adds, "I told you before, and foretel you, as if I were present *the second time*: and being absent, now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare." In this verse, the apostle is declaring beforehand what he would do in his intended visit : his expression, therefore, "as if I were present the second time," relates to that visit. But, if his future visit would only make him present among them a second time, it follows that he had been already there but once. Again, in the fifteenth verse of the first chapter, he tells them, "In this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might

have a *second* benefit." Why a second, and not a third benefit? why δευτεραν, and not τριτην χαριν, if the τριτον ερχομαι, in the fifteenth chapter, meant a *third* visit? for, though the visit in the first chapter be that visit in which he was disappointed, yet, as it is evident from the epistle that he had never been at Corinth from the time of the disappointment to the time of writing the epistle, it follows, that if it was only a second visit in which he was disappointed then, it could only be a second visit which he proposed now. But the text which I think is decisive of the question, if any question remain upon the subject, is the fourteenth verse of the twelfth chapter: "Behold the third time I am ready to come to you:" Ἰδου τριτον ετοιμως εχω ελθειν. It is very clear that the τριτον ετοιμως εχω ελθειν of the twelfth chapter, and the τριτον τουτο ερχομαι of the thirteenth chapter, are equivalent expressions, were intended to convey the same meaning, and to relate to the same journey. The comparison of these phrases gives us Saint Paul's own explanation of his own words; and it is that very explanation which we are contending for, viz. that τριτον τουτο ερχομαι does not mean that he was coming a third time, but that this was the third time he was in readiness to come, τριτον ετοιμως εχων. I do not apprehend, that after this it can be necessary to call to our aid the reading of the Alexandrian manuscript, which gives ετοιμως εχω ελθειν in the thirteenth chapter as well as in the twelfth; or of the Syriac and Coptic versions, which follow that reading; because I allow that this reading, besides not being sufficiently supported by ancient copies, is probably paraphrastical, and has been inserted for the purpose of expressing more unequivocally the sense, which the shorter expression τριτον τουτο ερχομαι was supposed to carry. Upon the whole, the matter is sufficiently certain: nor do I propose it as a new interpretation of the text which contains the difficulty, for the same was given by Grotius long ago: but I thought it the clearest way of explaining the subject, to describe the manner in which the difficulty, the solution, and the proofs of that solution, successively presented themselves to my inquiries. Now, in historical researches, a reconciled inconsistency becomes a positive argument. First, because an impostor generally guards against the appearance of inconsistency; and secondly, because, when apparent inconsistencies are found, it is seldom that any thing but truth renders them capable of reconciliation. The existence of the difficulty proves the want or absence of that caution, which usually accompanies the con-



sciousness of fraud ; and the solution proves, that it is not the collusion of fortuitous propositions which we have to deal with, but that a thread of truth winds through the whole, which preserves every circumstance in its place.

## No. XII.

Chap. x. 14—16. “We are come as far as to you also, preaching the Gospel of Christ ; not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men’s labours ; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you, according to our rule, abundantly to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you.”

This quotation affords an indirect, and therefore unsuspecting, but at the same time a distinct and indubitable recognition of the truth and exactness of the history. I consider it to be implied by the words of the quotation, that Corinth was the extremity of Saint Paul’s travels *hitherto*. He expresses to the Corinthians his hope, that in some future visit he might “preach the Gospel to the regions beyond them ;” which imports that he had not hitherto proceeded “beyond them,” but that Corinth was as yet the farthest point or boundary of his travels.—Now, how is Saint Paul’s first journey into Europe, which was the only one he had taken before the writing of the epistle, traced out in the history ? Sailing from Asia, he landed at Philippi ; from Philippi, traversing the eastern coast of the peninsula, he passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica ; from thence through Berea to Athens, and from Athens to Corinth, *where he stopped* ; and from whence, after a residence of a year and a half, he sailed back into Syria. So that Corinth was the last place which he visited in the peninsula ; was the place from which he returned into Asia, and was, as such, the boundary and limit of his progress. He could not have said the same thing, viz. “I hope hereafter to visit the regions beyond you,” in an epistle to the Philippians, or in an epistle to the Thessalonians, inasmuch as he must be deemed to have already visited the regions beyond *them*, having proceeded from those cities to other parts of Greece. But from Corinth he returned home : every part therefore beyond that city might properly be said, as it is said in the passage before us, to be unvisited. Yet is this propriety the spontaneous effect of truth, and produced without meditation or design.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

## No. I.

THE argument of this epistle in some measure proves its antiquity. It will hardly be doubted, but that it was written whilst the dispute concerning the circumcision of Gentile converts was fresh in men's minds: for, even supposing it to have been a forgery, the only credible motive that can be assigned for the forgery, was to bring the name and authority of the apostle into this controversy. No design could be so insipid, or so unlikely to enter into the thoughts of any man, as to produce an epistle written earnestly and pointedly upon one side of a controversy, when the controversy itself was dead, and the question no longer interesting to any description of readers whatever. Now the controversy concerning the circumcision of the Gentile Christians was of such a nature, that, if it arose at all, it must have arisen in the beginning of Christianity. As Judea was the scene of the Christian history; as the Author and preachers of Christianity were Jews; as the religion itself acknowledged and was founded upon the Jewish religion, in contradistinction to every other religion then professed amongst mankind: it was not to be wondered at, that some of its teachers should carry it out in the world rather as a sect and modification of Judaism than as a separate original revelation; or that they should invite their proselytes to those observances in which they lived themselves. This was likely to happen: but if it did not happen *at first*; if, whilst the religion was in the hands of Jewish teachers, no such claim was advanced, no such condition was attempted to be imposed, it is not probable that the doctrine would be started, much less that it should prevail in any future period. I likewise think, that those pretensions of Judaism were much more likely to be insisted upon, whilst the Jews continued a nation, than after their fall and dispersion; whilst Jerusalem and the temple stood, than after the destruction brought upon them by the Roman arms, the fatal cessation of the sacrifice and the priesthood, the humiliating loss of their country, and with it, of the great rites and symbols of their institution. It should seem therefore, from the nature of the subject, and the situation of the

parties, that this controversy was carried on in the interval between the preaching of Christianity to the Gentiles, and the invasion of Titus; and that our present epistle, which was undoubtedly intended to bear a part in this controversy, must be referred to the same period.

But, again, the epistle supposes that certain designing adherents of the Jewish law had crept into the churches of Galatia; and had been endeavouring, and but too successfully, to persuade the Galatic converts, that they had been taught the new religion imperfectly and at second hand; that the founder of their church himself possessed only an inferior and deputed commission, the seat of truth and authority being in the apostles and elders of Jerusalem; moreover, that whatever he might profess amongst them, he had himself at other times, and in other places, given way to the doctrine of circumcision. The epistle is unintelligible without supposing all this. Referring therefore to this, as to what had actually passed, we find St. Paul treating so unjust an attempt to undermine his credit, and to introduce amongst his converts a doctrine which he had uniformly reprobated, in terms of great asperity and indignation. And in order to refute the suspicions which had been raised concerning the fidelity of his teaching, as well as to assert the independency and divine original of his mission, we find him appealing to the history of his conversion, to his conduct under it, to the manner in which he had conferred with the apostles when he met with them at Jerusalem: alleging, that so far was his doctrine from being derived from them, or they from exercising any superiority over him, that they had simply assented to what he had already preached amongst the Gentiles, and which preaching was communicated not by them to him, but by himself to them; that he had maintained the liberty of the Gentile church, by opposing, upon one occasion, an apostle to the face, when the timidity of his behaviour seemed to endanger it; that from the first, that all along, that to that hour, he had constantly resisted the claims of Judaism; and that the persecutions which he daily underwent, at the hands or by the instigation of the Jews, and of which he bore in his person the marks and scars, might have been avoided by him, if he had consented to employ his labours in bringing, through the medium of Christianity, converts over to the Jewish institution, for then "would the offence of the cross have ceased." Now an impostor who had forged the epistle for the purpose of pro-



ducing St. Paul's authority in the dispute, which, as hath been observed, is the only credible motive that can be assigned for the forgery, might have made the apostle deliver his opinion upon the subject in strong and decisive terms, or might have put his name to a train of reasoning and argumentation upon that side of the question which the impostor was intended to recommend. I can allow the possibility of such a scheme as that. But for a writer, with this purpose in view, to feign a series of transactions supposed to have passed amongst the Christians of Galatia, and then to counterfeit expressions of anger and resentment excited by these transactions; to make the apostle travel back into his own history, and into a recital of various passages of his life, some indeed directly, but others obliquely, and others even obscurely bearing upon the point in question; in a word, to substitute narrative for argument, expostulation and complaint for dogmatic positions and controversial reasoning, in a writing properly controversial, and of which the aim and design was to support one side of a much agitated question—is a method so intricate, and so unlike the methods pursued by all other impostors, as to require very flagrant proofs of imposition to induce us to believe it to be one.

## No. II.

In this number I shall endeavour to prove,

1. That the Epistle to the Galatians, and the Acts of the Apostles, were written without any communication with each other.

2. That the Epistle, though written without any communication with the history, by recital, implication, or reference, bears testimony to many of the facts contained in it.

1. The Epistle and the Acts of the Apostles were written without any communication with each other.

To judge of this point, we must examine those passages in each, which describe the same transaction; for, if the author of either writing derived his information from the account which he had seen in the other, when he came to speak of the same transaction, he would follow that account. The history of St. Paul, at Damascus, as read in the Acts, and as referred to by the Epistle, forms an instance of this sort. According to the Acts, Paul (after his conversion) was certain days with the “disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he

preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he which destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, confounding the Jews which were at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him. But their laying wait was known to Saul; and they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples." Acts, chap. ix. 19—26.

According to the Epistle, "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus: then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem."

Beside the difference observable in the terms and general complexion of these two accounts, "the journey into Arabia," mentioned in the epistle, and omitted in the history, affords full proof that there existed no correspondence between these writers. If the narrative in the Acts had been made up from the Epistle, it is impossible that this journey should have been passed over in silence; if the Epistle had been composed out of what the author had read of St. Paul's history in the Acts, it is unaccountable that it should have been inserted <sup>a</sup>.

The journey to Jerusalem related in the second chapter of the Epistle ("then, fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem") supplies another example of the same kind. Either this was the journey described in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, when Paul and Barnabas were sent from Antioch to Jerusalem, to consult the apostles and elders upon the question of the Gentile converts; or it was some journey of which the history does

<sup>a</sup> N. B. The Acts of the Apostles simply inform us that St. Paul left Damascus in order to go to Jerusalem, "after many days were fulfilled." If any doubt whether the words "many days" could be intended to express a period which included a term of three years, he will find a complete instance of the same phrase used with the same latitude in the first book of Kings, chap. xi. 38, 39. "And Shimei dwelt at Jerusalem *many days*: and it came to pass at the end of *three years*, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away."

not take notice. If the first opinion be followed, the discrepancy in the two accounts is so considerable, that it is not without difficulty they can be adapted to the same transaction : so that, upon this supposition, there is no place for suspecting that the writers were guided or assisted by each other. If the latter opinion be preferred, we have then a journey to Jerusalem, and a conference with the principal members of the church there, circumstantially related in the Epistle, and entirely omitted in the Acts ; and we are at liberty to repeat the observation, which we before made, that the omission of so material a fact in the history is inexplicable, if the historian had read the Epistle ; and that the insertion of it in the Epistle, if the writer derived his information from the history, is not less so.

St. Peter's visit to Antioch, during which the dispute arose between him and St. Paul, is not mentioned in the Acts.

If we connect, with these instances, the general observation, that no scrutiny can discover the smallest trace of transcription or imitation either in things or words, we shall be fully satisfied in this part of our case ; namely, that the two records, be the facts contained in them true or false, come to our hands from independent sources.

Secondly, I say that the epistle, thus proved to have been written without any communication with the history, bears testimony to a great variety of particulars contained in the history.

1. St. Paul, in the early part of his life, had addicted himself to the study of the Jewish religion, and was distinguished by his zeal for the institution and for the traditions which had been incorporated with it. Upon this part of his character the history makes St. Paul speak thus : " I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers ; and was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day." Acts, chap. xxii. 3.

The epistle is as follows : " I profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." Chap. i. 14.

2. St. Paul, before his conversion, had been a fierce persecutor of the new sect. " As for Saul, he made havoc of the church ; entering into every house, and, haling men and women, committed them to prison." Acts, chap. viii. 3.



This is the history of St. Paul, as delivered in the Acts ; in the recital of his own history in the epistle, “Ye have heard,” says he, “of my conversation in times past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God.” Chap. i. 13.

3. St. Paul was miraculously converted on his way to Damascus. “And as he journeyed he came near to Damascus : and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven ; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? And he said, Who art thou, Lord ? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest ; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?” Acts, chap. ix. 3—6. With these compare the epistle, chap. i. 15—17 : “When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen ; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them that were apostles before me ; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.”

In this quotation from the epistle, I desire it to be remarked how incidentally it appears, that the affair passed at *Damascus*. In what may be called the direct part of the account, no mention is made of the place of his conversion at all : a casual expression at the end, and an expression brought in for a different purpose, alone fixes it to have been at Damascus ; “I returned again to Damascus.” Nothing can be more like simplicity and undesignedness than this is. It also draws the agreement between the two quotations somewhat closer, to observe, that they both state St. Paul to have preached the gospel immediately upon his call : “And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” Acts, chap. ix. 20. “When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” Gal. chap. i. 15.

4. The course of the apostle’s travels after his conversion was this : He went from Damascus to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem into Syria and Cilicia. “At Damascus the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket ; and when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples.” Acts, chap. ix. 25. Afterwards, “when the brethren knew the conspiracy formed against him at Jerusalem,

they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus, a city in Cilicia." Chap. ix. 30. In the epistle, St. Paul gives the following brief account of his proceedings within the same period: "After three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days; afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia." The history had told us that Paul passed from Cæsarea to Tarsus: if he took his journey by land, it would carry him through Syria into Cilicia; and he would come, after his visit at Jerusalem, "into the regions of Syria and Cilicia," in the very order in which he mentions them in the epistle. This supposition of his going from Cæsarea to Tarsus, *by land*, clears up also another point. It accounts for what St. Paul says in the same place concerning the churches of Judea: "Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea, which were in Christ: but they had heard only that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith, which once he destroyed; and they glorified God in me." Upon which passage I observe, first, that what is here said of the churches of Judea, is spoken in connexion with his journey into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. Secondly, that the passage itself has little significancy, and that the *connexion* is inexplicable, unless St. Paul went through Judea<sup>a</sup> (though probably by a hasty journey) at the time that he came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. Suppose him to have passed by land from Cæsarea to Tarsus, all this, as hath been observed, would be precisely true.

5. Barnabas was with St. Paul at Antioch. "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church." Acts, chap. xi. 25, 26. Again, and upon another occasion, "they (Paul and Barnabas) sailed to Antioch: and there they continued a long time with the disciples." Chap. xiv. 26.

Now what says the epistle? "When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed; and the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." Chap. ii. 11. 13.

<sup>a</sup> Dr. Doddridge thought that the Cæsarea here mentioned was not the celebrated city of that name upon the Mediterranean sea, but Cæsarea Philippi, near the borders of Syria, which lies in a much more direct line from Jerusalem to Tarsus than the other. The objection to this, Dr. Benson remarks, is, that Cæsarea, without any addition, usually denotes Cæsarea Palestinæ.

6. The stated residence of the apostles was at Jerusalem. "At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." Acts, chap. viii. 1. "They (the Christians at Antioch) determined that Paul and Barnabas should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question." Acts, chap. xv. 2.—With these accounts agrees the declaration in the epistle: "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me," chap. i. 17: for this declaration implies, or rather assumes it to be known, that Jerusalem was the place where the apostles were to be met with.

7. There were at Jerusalem two apostles, or at the least two eminent members of the church, of the name of James. This is directly inferred from the Acts of the Apostles, which in the second verse of the twelfth chapter relates the death of James, the brother of John; and yet in the fifteenth chapter, and in a subsequent part of the history, records a speech delivered by James in the assembly of the apostles and elders. It is also strongly implied by the form of expression used in the epistle: "Other apostles saw I none, save James, the *Lord's brother*;" *i. e.* to distinguish him from James the brother of John.

To us who have been long conversant in the Christian history, as contained in the Acts of the Apostles, these points are obvious and familiar; nor do we readily apprehend any greater difficulty in making them appear in a letter purporting to have been written by St. Paul, than there is in introducing them into a modern sermon. But, to judge correctly of the argument before us, we must discharge this knowledge from our thoughts. We must propose to ourselves the situation of an author who sat down to the writing of the epistle without having seen the history; and then the concurrences we have deduced will be deemed of importance. They will at least be taken for separate confirmations of the several facts, and not only of these particular facts, but of the general truth of the history.

For, what is the rule with respect to corroborative testimony which prevails in courts of justice, and which prevails only because experience has proved that it is an useful guide to truth? A principal witness in a cause delivers his account: his narrative, in certain parts of it, is confirmed by witnesses who are called afterwards. The credit derived from their testimony belongs not only to the particular circumstances in which the auxiliary witnesses agree with the principal witness, but in



some measure to the whole of his evidence; because it is improbable that accident or fiction should draw a line which touched upon truth in so many points.

In like manner, if two records be produced, manifestly independent, that is, manifestly written without any participation of intelligence, an agreement between them, even in few and slight circumstances, (especially if from the different nature and design of the writings few points only of agreement, and those incidental, could be expected to occur,) would add a sensible weight to the authority of both, in every part of their contents.

The same rule is applicable to history, with at least as much reason as any other species of evidence.

### No. III.

But although the references to various particulars in the epistle, compared with the direct account of the same particulars in the history, afford a considerable proof of the truth not only of these particulars, but of the narrative which contains them; yet they do not show, it will be said, that the epistle was written by St. Paul: for admitting (what seems to have been proved) that the writer, whoever he was, had no recourse to the Acts of the Apostles, yet many of the facts referred to, such as St. Paul's miraculous conversion, his change from a virulent persecutor to an indefatigable preacher, his labours amongst the Gentiles, and his zeal for the liberties of the Gentile church, were so notorious as to occur readily to the mind of any Christian, who should choose to personate his character, and counterfeit his name; it was only to write what every body knew. Now I think that this supposition—viz. that the epistle was composed upon general information, and the general publicity of the facts alluded to, and that the author did no more than weave into his work what the common fame of the Christian church had reported to his ears—is repelled by the particularity of the recitals and references. This particularity is observable in the following instances; in perusing which, I desire the reader to reflect, whether they exhibit the language of a man who had nothing but general reputation to proceed upon, or of a man actually speaking of himself and of his own history, and consequently of things concerning which he possessed a clear, intimate, and circumstantial knowledge.

1. The history, in giving an account of St. Paul after his  
VOL. II.

conversion, relates, "that, after many days," effecting, by the assistance of the disciples, his escape from Damascus, "he proceeded to Jerusalem." Acts, chap. ix. 25. The epistle, speaking of the same period, makes St. Paul say that "he went into Arabia," that he returned again to Damascus, that after three years he went up to Jerusalem. Chap. i. 17, 18.

2. The history relates, that, when Saul was come from Damascus, "he was with the disciples coming in and going out." Acts, chap. ix. 28. The epistle, describing the same journey, tells us, "that he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days." Chap. i. 18.

3. The history relates, that when Paul was come to Jerusalem, "Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles." Acts, chap. ix. 27. The epistle, "that he saw Peter; but other of the apostles saw he none, save James, the Lord's brother." Chap. i. 19.

Now this is as it should be. The historian delivers his account in general terms, as of facts to which he was not present. The person who is the subject of that account, when he comes to speak of these facts himself, particularises time, names, and circumstances.

4. The like notation of places, persons, and dates, is met with in the account of St. Paul's journey to Jerusalem, given in the second chapter of the epistle. It was fourteen years after his conversion; it was in company with Barnabas and Titus; it was then that he met with James, Cephas, and John; it was then also that it was agreed amongst them, that they should go to the circumcision, and he unto the Gentiles.

5. The dispute with Peter, which occupies the sequel of the second chapter, is marked with the same particularity. It was at Antioch; it was after certain came from James; it was whilst Barnabas was there, who was carried away by their dissimulation. These examples negative the insinuation, that the epistle presents nothing but indefinite allusions to public facts.

#### · No. IV.

Chap. iv. 11—16. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am, for I am as ye are. Ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how, through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the Gospel unto you at the first; and *my temptation, which was in the flesh*, ye

despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them unto me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"

With this passage compare 2 Cor. chap. xii. 1—9: "It is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory; I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell; God knoweth;) such a one was caught up to the third heaven; and I knew such a man, (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth,) how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one will I glory, yet of myself will I not glory, but in mine infirmities: for, though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth. But now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me *a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me*, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

There can be no doubt but that "the temptation which was in the flesh," mentioned in the Epistle to the Galatians, and "the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him," mentioned in the Epistle to the Corinthians, were intended to denote the same thing. Either therefore it was, what we pretend it to have been, the same person in both, alluding, as the occasion led him, to some bodily infirmity under which he laboured: that is, we are reading the real letters of a real apostle; or, it was that a sophist, who had seen the circumstance in one epistle, contrived, for the sake of correspondency, to bring it into another; or, lastly, it was a circumstance in St. Paul's personal condition, supposed to be well known to those into whose hands the epistle was likely to fall; and, for that reason, introduced into a writing designed to bear his name. I have



extracted the quotations at length, in order to enable the reader to judge accurately of the manner in which the mention of this particular comes in, in each; because that judgement, I think, will acquit the author of the epistle of the charge of having studiously inserted it, either with a view of producing an apparent agreement between them, or for any other purpose whatever.

The context, by which the circumstance before us is introduced, is in the two places totally different, and without any mark of imitation: yet in both places does the circumstance rise aptly and naturally out of the context, and that context from the train of thought carried on in the epistle.

The Epistle to the Galatians, from the beginning to the end, runs in a strain of angry complaint of their defection from the apostle, and from the principles which he had taught them. It was very natural to contrast with this conduct, the zeal with which they had once received him; and it was not less so to mention, as a proof of their former disposition towards him, the indulgence which, whilst he was amongst them, they had shown to his infirmity: "My temptation which was in the flesh ye despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?" *i.e.* the benedictions which you bestowed upon me; "for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me."

In the two epistles to the Corinthians, especially in the second, we have the apostle contending with certain teachers in Corinth, who had formed a party in that church against him. To vindicate his personal authority, as well as the dignity and credit of his ministry amongst them, he takes occasion (but not without apologising repeatedly for the folly, that is, for the indecorum of pronouncing his own panegyric <sup>a</sup>) to meet his adversaries in their boastings: "Whereinsoever any is bold (I speak foolishly) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they the ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." Being led to the sub-

<sup>a</sup> "Would to God you would bear with me a little in my folly, and indeed bear with me!" Chap. xi. 1.

"That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting." Chap. xi. 17.

"I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me." Chap. xii. 11.

ject, he goes on, as was natural, to recount his trials and dangers, his incessant cares and labours in the Christian mission. From the proofs which he had given of his zeal and activity in the service of Christ, he passes (and that with the same view of establishing his claim to be considered as “not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles”) to the visions and revelations which from time to time had been vouchsafed to him. And then, by a close and easy connexion, comes in the mention of his infirmity: “Lest I should be exalted,” says he, “above measure, through the abundance of revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.”

Thus then, in both epistles, the notice of his infirmity is suited to the place in which it is found. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, the train of thought draws up to the circumstance by a regular approximation. In this epistle, it is suggested by the subject and occasion of the epistle itself. Which observation we offer as an argument to prove that it is not, in either epistle, a circumstance industriously brought forward for the sake of procuring credit to an imposture.

A reader will be taught to perceive the force of this argument, who shall attempt to introduce a *given* circumstance into the body of a writing. To do this without abruptness, or without betraying marks of design in the transition, requires, he will find, more art than he expected to be necessary, certainly more than any one can believe to have been exercised in the composition of these epistles.

#### No. V.

Chap. iv. 29. “But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.”

Chap. v. 11. “And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the cross ceased.”

Chap. vi. 17. “From henceforth, let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

From these several texts, it is apparent that the persecutions which our apostle had undergone were from the hands or by the instigation of the Jews; that it was not for preaching Christianity in opposition to heathenism, but it was for preaching it as distinct from Judaism, that he had brought upon

himself the sufferings which had attended his ministry. And this representation perfectly coincides with that which results from the detail of St. Paul's history, as delivered in the Acts. At Antioch, in Pisidia, the "word of the Lord was published throughout all the region; but the *Jews stirred up* the devout and honourable women and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts."—(Acts, chap. xiii. 50.) Not long after, at Iconium, "a great multitude of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed; but the *unbelieving Jews* stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." (Chap. xiv. 1, 2.) "At Lystra there came certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people; and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead." (Chap. xiv. 19.) The same enmity, and from the same quarter, our apostle experienced in Greece: "At Thessalonica, some of them (the Jews) believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas: and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few: but *the Jews which believed not*, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people." (Acts, chap. xvii. 4, 5.) Their persecutors follow them to Berea: "When the *Jews* of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people." (Chap. xvii. 13.) And lastly at Corinth, when Gallio was deputy of Achaia, "*the Jews* made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgement-seat." I think it does not appear that our apostle was ever set upon by the Gentiles, unless they were first stirred up by the Jews, except in two instances; in both which the persons who began the assault were immediately interested in his expulsion from the place. Once this happened at Philippi, after the cure of the Pythoness: "When the masters saw the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers." (Chap. xvi. 19.) And a second time at Ephesus, at the instance of Demetrius, a silversmith which made silver shrines for Diana, "who called together workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth; moreover ye see and hear that not only at Ephesus,



but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded away much people, saying, that they be no gods which are made with hands; so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth."

## No. VI.

I observe an agreement in a somewhat peculiar rule of Christian conduct, as laid down in this epistle, and as exemplified in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. It is not the repetition of the same general precept, which would have been a coincidence of little value; but it is the general precept in one place, and the application of that precept to an actual occurrence in the other. In the sixth chapter and first verse of this epistle, our apostle gives the following direction: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye, which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness." In 2 Cor. chap. ii. 6—8, he writes thus: "Sufficient to such a man" (the incestuous person mentioned in the First Epistle) "is this punishment, which was inflicted of many: so that, contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with over-much sorrow: wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love towards him." I have little doubt but that it was the same mind which dictated these two passages.

## No. VII.

Our epistle goes farther than any of St. Paul's epistles; for it avows in direct terms the supersession of the Jewish law, as an instrument of salvation, even to the Jews themselves. Not only were the Gentiles exempt from its authority, but even the Jews were no longer either to place any dependency upon it, or consider themselves as subject to it on a religious account. "Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed; wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith; but, after that faith is come, *we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*" (Chap. iii. 23—25.) This was undoubtedly spoken of Jews and to Jews. In like manner, chap. iv. 1—5; "Now I say that the heir, as long as he is

a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father: even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to *redeem them that were under the law*, that we might receive the adoption of sons." These passages are nothing short of a declaration, that the obligation of the Jewish law, considered as a religious dispensation, the effects of which were to take place in another life, had ceased, with respect even to the Jews themselves. What then should be the conduct of a Jew, (for such St. Paul was,) who preached this doctrine? To be consistent with himself, either he would no longer comply, in his own person, with the directions of the law; or, if he did comply, it would be for some other reason than any confidence which he placed in its efficacy, as a religious institution. Now so it happens, that whenever St. Paul's compliance with the Jewish law is mentioned in the history, it is mentioned in connexion with circumstances which point out the motive from which it proceeded; and this motive appears to have been always exoteric, namely, a love of order and tranquillity, or an unwillingness to give unnecessary offence. Thus, Acts, chap. xvi. 3: "Him (Timothy) would Paul have to go forth with him, and took and circumcised him, *because of the Jews which were in those quarters*." Again, Acts, chap. xxi. 26, when Paul consented to exhibit an example of public compliance with a Jewish rite by purifying himself in the temple, it is plainly intimated that he did this to satisfy "many thousands of Jews who believed, and who were all zealous of the law." So far the instances related in one book, correspond with the doctrine delivered in another.

## No. VIII.

Chap. i. 18. "Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days."

The shortness of St. Paul's stay at Jerusalem is what I desire the reader to remark. The direct account of the same journey in the Acts, chap. ix. 28, determines nothing concerning the time of his continuance there: "And he was with them (the apostles) coming in, and going out, at Jerusalem; and he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the

Grecians: but they went about to slay him; which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cæsarea." Or rather this account, taken by itself, would lead a reader to suppose that St. Paul's abode at Jerusalem had been longer than fifteen days. But turn to the twenty-second chapter of the Acts, and you will find a reference to this visit to Jerusalem, which plainly indicates that Paul's continuance in that city had been of short duration: "And it came to pass, that when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance, and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." Here we have the general terms of one text so explained by a distant text in the same book, as to bring an indeterminate expression into a close conformity with a specification delivered in another book: a species of consistency not, I think; usually found in fabulous relations.

#### No. IX.

Chap. vi. 11. "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand."

These words imply that he did not always write with his own hand; which is consonant to what we find intimated in some other of the epistles. The Epistle to the Romans was written by Tertius: "I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord." (Chap. xvi. 22.) The first Epistle to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Colossians, and the Second to the Thesalonians, have all, near the conclusion, this clause, "The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand;" which must be understood, and is universally understood to import, that the rest of the epistle was written by another hand. I do not think it improbable, that an impostor, who had remarked this subscription in some other epistle, should invent the same in a forgery; but that is not done here. The author of this epistle does not imitate the manner of giving St. Paul's signature; he only bids the Galatians observe how large a letter he had written to them with own hand. He does not say this was different from his ordinary usage; this is left to implication. Now to suppose that this was an artifice to procure credit to an imposture, is to suppose that the author of the forgery, because he knew that others of St. Paul's were *not* written by himself, therefore made the apostle say that this was: which seems an



odd turn to give to the circumstance, and to be given for a purpose which would more naturally and more directly have been answered by subjoining the salutation or signature in the form in which it is found in other epistles<sup>a</sup>.

### No. X.

An exact conformity appears in the manner in which a certain apostle or eminent Christian, whose name was James, is spoken of in the epistle and in the history. Both writings refer to a situation of his at Jerusalem, somewhat different from that of the other apostles; a kind of eminence or presidency in the church there, or at least a more fixed and stationary residence. Chap. ii. 12. "When Peter was at Antioch, before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles." This text plainly attributes a kind of pre-eminency to James; and, as we hear of him twice in the same epistle dwelling at Jerusalem, chap. i. 19, and ii. 9, we must apply it to the situation which he held in that church. In the Acts of the Apostles divers intimations occur, conveying the same idea of James's situation. When Peter was miraculously delivered from prison, and had surprised his friends by his appearance among them, after declaring unto them how the Lord had brought him out of prison, "Go show," says he, "these things unto James, and to the brethren." (Acts, chap. xii. 17.) Here James is manifestly spoken of in terms of distinction. He appears again with like distinction in the twenty-first chapter and the seventeenth and eighteenth verses: "And when we (Paul and his company) were come to Jerusalem, the day following, Paul went in with us unto James, and all the elders were present." In the debate which took place upon the business of the Gentile converts, in the council at Jerusalem, this same person seems to have taken the lead. It was he who closed the debate, and proposed the resolution in which the council ultimately concurred: "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God."

<sup>a</sup> The words *πᾶσι τοῖς γράμμασι* may probably be meant to describe the character in which he wrote, and not the length of the letter. But this will not alter the truth of our observation. I think, however, that as St. Paul by the mention of his own hand designed to express to the Galatians the great concern which he felt for them, the words, whatever they signify, belong to the whole of the epistle; and not, as Grotius, after St. Jerome, interprets it, to the few verses which follow.

Upon the whole, that there exists a conformity in the expressions used concerning *James* throughout the history, and in the epistle, is unquestionable. But admitting this conformity, and admitting also the undesignedness of it, what does it prove? It proves that the circumstance itself is founded in truth; that is, that James was a real person, who held a situation of eminence in a real society of Christians at Jerusalem. It confirms also those parts of the narrative which are connected with this circumstance. Suppose, for instance, the truth of the account of Peter's escape from prison was to be tried upon the testimony of a witness who, among other things, made Peter, after his deliverance, say, "Go show these things to James and to the brethren;" would it not be material, in such a trial, to make out by other independent proofs, or by a comparison of proofs, drawn from independent sources, that there was actually at that time, living at Jerusalem, such a person as James; that this person held such a situation in the society amongst whom these things were transacted, as to render the words which Peter is said to have used concerning him, proper and natural for him to have used? If this would be pertinent in the discussion of oral testimony, it is still more so in appreciating the credit of remote history.

It must not be dissembled that the comparison of our epistle with the history presents some difficulties, or, to say the least, some questions of considerable magnitude. It may be doubted, in the first place, to what journey the words which open the second chapter of the epistle, "then, fourteen years afterwards, I went unto Jerusalem," relate. That which best corresponds with the date, and that to which most interpreters apply the passage, is the journey of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, when they went thither from Antioch, upon the business of the Gentile converts; and which journey produced the famous council and decree recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. To me this opinion appears to be encumbered with strong objections. In the epistle Paul tells us that "he went up by revelation." (Chap. ii. 2.)—In the Acts, we read that he was sent by the church of Antioch: "After no small dissension and disputation, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to the apostles and elders about this question." (Acts, chap. xv. 2.) This is not very reconcilable. In the epistle St. Paul writes that, when he came to Jerusalem, "he communicated that Gospel which he preached among

the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation." (Chap. ii. 2.) If by "that Gospel" he meant the immunity of the Gentile Christians from the Jewish law, (and I know not what else it can mean,) it is not easy to conceive how he should communicate that privately, which was the object of his public message. But a yet greater difficulty remains, viz. that in the account which the epistle gives of what passed upon this visit at Jerusalem, no notice is taken of the deliberation and decree which are recorded in the Acts, and which, according to that history, formed the business for the sake of which the journey was undertaken. The mention of the council and of its determination, whilst the apostle was relating his proceedings at Jerusalem, could hardly have been avoided, if in truth the narrative belong to the same journey. To me it appears more probable that Paul and Barnabas had taken some journey to Jerusalem, the mention of which is omitted in the Acts. Prior to the apostolic decree, we read that "Paul and Barnabas abode at Antioch a long time with the disciples." (Acts, chap. xiv. 28.) Is it unlikely that, during this long abode, they might go up to Jerusalem and return to Antioch? Or would the omission of such a journey be unsuitable to the general brevity with which these memoirs are written, especially of those parts of St. Paul's history which took place before the historian joined his society?

But, again, the first account we find in the Acts of the Apostles of Saint Paul's visiting Galatia, is in the sixteenth chapter and the sixth verse: "Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they assayed to go into Bithynia." The progress here recorded was subsequent to the apostolic decree; therefore that decree must have been extant when our epistle was written. Now, as the professed design of the epistle was to establish the exemption of the Gentile converts from the law of Moses, and as the decree pronounced and confirmed that exemption, it may seem extraordinary that no notice whatever is taken of that determination, nor any appeal made to its authority. Much however of the weight of this objection, which applies also to some other of Saint Paul's epistles, is removed by the following reflections.

1. It was not Saint Paul's manner, nor agreeable to it, to resort or defer much to the authority of the other apostles, especially whilst he was insisting, as he does strenuously throughout this epistle insist, upon his own original inspiration. He who could speak of the very chiefest of the apostles in such terms as



the following—"of those who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were it maketh no matter to me, God accepteth no man's person,) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me"—he, I say, was not likely to support himself by their decision.

2. The epistle argues the point upon principle: and it is not perhaps more to be wondered at, that in such an argument Saint Paul should not cite the apostolic decree, than it would be that in a discourse designed to prove the moral and religious duty of observing the sabbath, the writer should not quote the thirteenth canon.

3. The decree did not go the length of the position maintained in the epistle; the decree only declares that the apostles and elders at Jerusalem did not impose the observance of the Mosaic law upon the Gentile converts, as a condition of their being admitted into the Christian church. Our epistle argues that the Mosaic institution itself was at an end, as to all effects upon a future state, even with respect to the Jews themselves.

4. They whose error Saint Paul combated, were not persons who submitted to the Jewish law, because it was imposed by the authority, or because it was made part of the law of the Christian church; but they were persons who, having already become Christians, afterwards voluntarily took upon themselves the observance of the Mosaic code, under a notion of attaining thereby to a greater perfection. This, I think, is precisely the opinion which Saint Paul opposes in this epistle. Many of his expressions apply exactly to it: "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?" (Chap. iii. 3.) "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" (Chap. iv. 21.) "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (Chap. iv. 9.) It cannot be thought extraordinary that Saint Paul should resist this opinion with earnestness; for it both changed the character of the Christian dispensation, and derogated expressly from the completeness of that redemption which Jesus Christ had wrought for them that believed in him. But it was to no purpose to allege to such persons the decision at Jerusalem; for that only showed that they were not bound to these observances by any law of the Christian church: they did not pretend to be so bound; nevertheless they imagined that there was an efficacy in these observances, a merit, a recommendation to favour, and a ground of acceptance with God for

those who complied with them. This was a situation of thought to which the tenor of the decree did not apply. Accordingly, Saint Paul's address to the Galatians, which is throughout adapted to this situation, runs in a strain widely different from the language of the decree: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law;" (chap. v. 4;) *i. e.* whosoever places his dependence upon any merit he may apprehend there to be in legal observances. The decree had said nothing like this; therefore it would have been useless to have produced the decree in an argument of which this was the burden. In like manner as in contending with an anchorite, who should insist upon the superior holiness of a recluse, ascetic life, and the value of such mortifications in the sight of God, it would be to no purpose to prove that the laws of the church did not require these vows, or even to prove that the laws of the church expressly left every Christian to his liberty. This would avail little towards abating his estimation of their merit, or towards settling the point in controversy<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Mr. Locke's solution of this difficulty is by no means satisfactory. "Saint Paul," he says, "did not remind the Galatians of the apostolic decree, because they already had it." In the first place, it does not appear with certainty that they had it; in the second place, if they had it, this was rather a reason, than otherwise, for referring them to it. The passage in the Acts, from which Mr. Locke concludes that the Galatic churches were in possession of the decree, is the fourth verse of the sixteenth chapter: "And as they" (Paul and Timothy) "went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem." In my opinion, this delivery of the decree was confined to the churches to which Saint Paul came, in pursuance of the plan upon which he set out, "of visiting the brethren in every city where he had preached the word of the Lord;" the history of which progress, and of all that pertained to it, is closed in the fifth verse, when the history informs that, "so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." Then the history proceeds upon a new section of the narrative, by telling us, that "when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they assayed to go into Bithynia." The decree itself is directed to "the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia;" that is, to churches already founded, and in which this question had been stirred. And I think the observation of the noble author of the *Miscellanea Sacra* is not only ingenious but highly probable, viz. that there is, in this place, a dislocation of the text, and that the fourth and fifth verses of the sixteenth chapter ought to follow the last verse of the fifteenth, so as to make the entire passage run thus: "And they went through Syria and Cilicia," (to the Christians of which country the decree was addressed,) "confirming the churches; and as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem; and so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." And then the sixteenth chapter takes up a new and unbroken paragraph: "Then came he to Derbe and Lystra," &c. When Saint Paul came, as he did into Galatia, to preach the Gospel, for the first time, in a new place, it is not probable that he would make mention of the decree, or rather letter, of the church of Jerusalem, which presupposed Christianity to be known, and which related to certain doubts that had arisen in some established Christian communities.

The second reason which Mr. Locke assigns for the omission of the decree, viz.



Another difficulty arises from the account of Peter's conduct towards the Gentile converts at Antioch, as given in the epistle, in the latter part of the second chapter; which conduct, it is said, is consistent neither with the revelation communicated to him, upon the conversion of Cornelius, nor with the part he took in the debate at Jerusalem. But, in order to understand either the difficulty or the solution, it will be necessary to state and explain the passage itself. "When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed; for, before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision; and the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation; but when I saw they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter, before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Now the question that produced the dispute to which these words relate, was not whether the Gentiles were capable of being admitted into the Christian covenant; that had been fully settled: nor was it whether it should be accounted essential to the profession of Christianity that they should conform themselves to the law of Moses; that was the question at Jerusalem: but it was, whether, upon the Gentiles becoming Christians, the Jews might henceforth eat and drink with them, as with their own brethren. Upon this point Saint Peter betrayed some inconstancy; and so he might, agreeably enough to his history. He might consider the vision at Joppa as a direction for the occasion, rather than as universally abolishing the distinction between Jew and Gentile; I do not mean with respect to final acceptance with God, but as to the manner of their living together in society: at least he might not have comprehended this point with such clearness and certainty, as to stand out upon it against the fear of bringing upon himself the censure and complaint of his brethren in the church of Jerusalem, who still ad-

"that Saint Paul's sole object in the epistle was to acquit himself of the imputation that had been charged upon him of actually preaching circumcision," does not appear to me to be strictly true. It was not the sole object. The epistle is written in general opposition to the Judaizing inclinations which he found to prevail among his converts. The avowal of his own doctrine, and of his stedfast adherence to that doctrine, formed a necessary part of the design of his letter, but was not the whole of it.



hered to their ancient prejudices. But Peter, it is said, compelled the Gentiles *Ιουδαίειν*—"Why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" How did he do that? The only way in which Peter appears to have compelled the Gentiles to comply with the Jewish institution, was by withdrawing himself from their society. By which he may be understood to have made this declaration: "We do not deny your right to be considered as Christians; we do not deny your title in the promises of the Gospel, even without compliance with our law: but if you would have us Jews live with you as we do with one another, that is, if you would in all respects be treated by us as Jews, you must live as such yourselves." This, I think, was the compulsion which Saint Peter's conduct imposed upon the Gentiles, and for which Saint Paul reproved him.

As to the part which the historian ascribes to St. Peter in the debate at Jerusalem, beside that it was a different question which was there agitated from that which produced the dispute at Antioch, there is nothing to hinder us from supposing that the dispute at Antioch was prior to the consultation at Jerusalem; or that Peter, in consequence of this rebuke, might have afterwards maintained firmer sentiments.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

#### No. I.

THIS epistle, and the Epistle to the Colossians, appear to have been transmitted to their respective churches by the same messenger: "But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things; whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts." Ephes. chap. vi. 21, 22. This text, if it do not expressly declare, clearly I think intimates, that the letter was sent by Tychicus. The words made use of by him in the Epistle to the Colossians are very similar to these, and afford the same implication that Tychicus, in conjunction with Onesimus, was the bearer of the letter to that church: "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you,

who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister, and fellow-servant in the Lord; whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here." Colos. chap. iv. 7—9. Both epistles represent the writer as under imprisonment for the Gospel; and both treat of the same general subject. The Epistle therefore to the Ephesians, and the Epistle to the Colossians, import to be two letters written by the same person, at, or nearly at, the same time, and upon the same subject, and to have been sent by the same messenger. Now, every thing in the sentiments, order, and diction of the two writings, corresponds with what might be expected from this circumstance of identity or cognation in their original. The leading doctrine of both epistles is the union of Jews and Gentiles under the Christian dispensation; and that doctrine in both is established by the same arguments, or, more properly speaking, illustrated by the same similitudes<sup>a</sup>: "one head," "one body," "one new man," "one temple," are in both epistles the figures under which the society of believers in Christ, and their common relation to him as such, is represented<sup>b</sup>. The ancient, and, as had been thought, the indelible distinction between Jew and Gentile, in both epistles, is declared to be "now abolished by his cross." Beside this consent in the general tenor of the two epistles, and in the run also and warmth of thought with which they are composed, we may naturally expect in letters produced under the circumstances in which these appear to have been written, a closer resemblance of style and diction, than between other letters of the same person but of distant dates, or between letters adapted to different occasions. In particular we may look for many of the

<sup>a</sup> St. Paul, I am apt to believe, has been sometimes accused of inconclusive reasoning, by our mistaking that for reasoning which was only intended for illustration. He is not to be read as a man, whose own persuasion of the truth of what he taught always or solely depended upon the views under which he represents it in his writings. Taking for granted the certainty of his doctrine, as resting upon the revelation that had been imparted to him, he exhibits it frequently to the conception of his readers under images and allegories, in which if an analogy may be perceived, or even sometimes a poetic resemblance be found, it is all perhaps that is required.

<sup>b</sup> Compare .... { Ephes. i. 22, } with { Colos. i. 18.  
iv. 15, } ii. 19.  
ii. 15, } iii. 10, 11.  
Also { Ephes. ii. 14, 15, } with { Colos. ii. 14.  
ii. 16, } i. 18—21.  
ii. 20, } ii. 7.

same expressions, and sometimes for whole sentences being alike; since such expressions and sentences would be repeated in the second letter, (whichever that was,) as yet fresh in the author's mind from the writing of the first. This repetition occurs in the following examples<sup>a</sup>:

Ephes. ch. i. 7. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."<sup>b</sup>

Colos. ch. i. 14. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."<sup>c</sup>

Besides the sameness of the words, it is farther remarkable that the sentence is, in both places, preceded by the same introductory idea. In the Epistle to the Ephesians it is the "*beloved*" (ἡγαπημενῶ); in that to the Colossians it is "*his dear Son*" (υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγαπῆς αὐτοῦ), "in whom we have redemption." The sentence appears to have been suggested to the mind of the writer by the idea which had accompanied it before.

Ephes. ch. i. 10. "All things both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in him."<sup>d</sup>

Colos. ch. i. 20. "All things by him, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."<sup>e</sup>

This quotation is the more observable, because the connecting of things in earth with things in heaven is a very singular sentiment, and found nowhere else but in these two epistles. The words also are introduced by describing the union which Christ had effected, and they are followed by telling the Gentile churches that they were incorporated into it.

Ephes. ch. iii. 2. "The dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you ward."<sup>f</sup>

Colos. ch. i. 25. "The dispensation of God, which is given to me for you."<sup>g</sup>

Of these sentences it may likewise be observed that the accompanying ideas are similar. In both places they are

<sup>a</sup> When *verbal* comparisons are relied upon, it becomes necessary to state the original; but that the English reader may be interrupted as little as may be, I shall in general do this in the notes.

<sup>b</sup> Ephes. ch. i. 7. Ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολυτῶσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἀφῆσιν τῶν πικρασματῶν.

<sup>c</sup> Colos. ch. i. 14. Ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολυτῶσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἀφῆσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. However, it must be observed, that in this latter text many copies have not διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ.

<sup>d</sup> Ephes. ch. i. 10. Τὰ τε ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἐν αὐτῷ.

<sup>e</sup> Colos. ch. i. 20. Δι' αὐτοῦ, εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

<sup>f</sup> Ephes. ch. iii. 2. Τὴν οἰκονομίαν χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς.

<sup>g</sup> Colos. ch. i. 25. Τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὴν δοθείσαν μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς.



immediately preceded by the mention of his present sufferings ; in both places they are immediately followed by the mention of the mystery which was the great subject of his preaching.

Ephes. ch. v. 19. "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."<sup>a</sup>

Colos. ch. iii. 16. "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."<sup>b</sup>

Ephes. ch. vi. 22. "Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts."<sup>c</sup>

Colos. ch. iv. 8. "Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts."<sup>d</sup>

In these examples, we do not perceive a cento of phrases gathered from one composition, and strung together in the other ; but the occasional occurrence of the same expression to a mind a second time revolving the same ideas.

2. Whoever writes two letters, or two discourses, nearly upon the same subject, and at no great distance of time, but without any express recollection of what he had written before, will find himself repeating some sentences, in the very order of the words in which he had already used them ; but he will more frequently find himself employing some principal terms, with the order inadvertently changed, or with the order disturbed by the intermixture of other words and phrases expressive of ideas rising up at the time ; or in many instances repeating not single words, nor yet whole sentences, but parts and fragments of sentences. Of all these varieties the examination of our two epistles will furnish plain examples : and I should rely upon this class of instances more than upon the last ; because, although an impostor might transcribe into a forgery entire sentences and phrases, yet the dislocation of words, the partial recollection of phrases and sentences, the intermixture of new terms and new ideas with terms and ideas before used, which will appear in the examples that follow, and which are the

<sup>a</sup> Ephes. ch. v. 19. Ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις, καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς ἀδόντες καὶ ψάλλοντες ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ Κυρίῳ.

<sup>b</sup> Colos. ch. iii. 16. Ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς, ἐν χάριτι ἀδόντες ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ Κυρίῳ.

<sup>c</sup> Ephes. ch. vi. 22. Ὅν ἐπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ἵνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν, καὶ παρακαλῆσθ τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν.

<sup>d</sup> Colos. ch. iv. 8. Ὅν ἐπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ἵνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν, καὶ παρακαλῆσθ τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν.

natural properties of writings produced under the circumstances in which these epistles are represented to have been composed—would not, I think, have occurred to the invention of a forger; nor, if they had occurred, would they have been so easily executed. This studied variation was a refinement in forgery which I believe did not exist; or, if we can suppose it to have been practised in the instances adduced below, why, it may be asked, was not the same art exercised upon those which we have collected in the preceding class?

Ephes. ch. i. 19; chap. ii. 5. “Towards us who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, (and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet: and gave him to be the head over all things, to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him, that filleth all in all;) and you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, (wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation, in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewithal he loved us,) even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.”<sup>a</sup>

Colos. ch. ii. 12, 13. “Through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead: and you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of the flesh, hath he quickened together with him.”<sup>b</sup>

Out of the long quotation from the Ephesians take away the parentheses, and you have left a sentence almost in terms the same as the short quotation from the Colossians. The resemblance is more visible in the original than in our translation; for what is rendered in one place, “the working,” and in an-

<sup>a</sup> Ephes. ch. i. 19, 20; ii. 1. 5. *Τους πιστευοντας κατα την ενεργειαν του κρατους της ισχυος αυτου, ην ανεγειρεν εν τω Χριστω, εγειρας αυτον εκ νεκρων, και ικαθισεν εν δεξια αυτου εν τοις ουρανοις—και υμας οντας νεκρους τοις παραπτωμασι και ταις αμαρτιαις—και οντας ημας νεκρους τοις παραπτωμασι, συνεζωοποιησε τω Χριστω.*

<sup>b</sup> Colos. ch. ii. 12, 13. *Δια της πιστιως της ενεργιας του Θεου του εγειραντος αυτον εκ των νεκρων. Και υμας νεκρους οντας εν τοις παραπτωμασι και τη ακροβυστια της σαρκος υμων, συνεζωοποιησε συν αυτω.*

other the "operation," is the same Greek term *ἐνεργεια*: in one place it is, *τοὺς πιστευόντας κατὰ τὴν ἐνεργειαν*; in the other, *διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας*. Here, therefore, we have the same sentiment, and nearly in the same words; but, in the Ephesians, twice broken or interrupted by incidental thoughts, which Saint Paul, as his manner was, enlarges upon by the way<sup>a</sup>, and then returns to the thread of his discourse. It is interrupted the first time by a view which breaks in upon his mind of the exaltation of Christ; and the second time by a description of heathen depravity. I have only to remark that Griesbach, in his very accurate edition, gives the parentheses very nearly in the same manner in which they are here placed; and that without any respect to the comparison which we are proposing.

Ephes. ch. iv. 2—4. "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling."<sup>b</sup>

Colos. ch. iii. 12—15. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye; and, above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness; and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body."<sup>c</sup>

In these two quotations the words *ταπεινοφροσυνη*, *πραότης*, *μακροθυμία*, *ανεχομενοι* *αλληλων*, occur in exactly the same order: *αγαπη* is also found in both, but in a different connexion; *συνδεσμος* *τῆς εἰρήνης* answers to *συνδεσμος* *τῆς τελειότητος*: *ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἐνὶ σωματι* to *ἐν σῶμα καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι*: yet is this similitude found in the midst of sentences otherwise very different.

Ephes. ch. iv. 16. "From whom the whole body fitly joined

<sup>a</sup> Vide Locke in loc.

<sup>b</sup> Ephes. ch. iv. 2—4. Μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραότητος, μετὰ μακροθυμίας, ἀνεχομενοὶ ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγαπῇ σπουδαζόντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἑνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης. Ἐν σῶμα καὶ ἐν πνεύμα, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλησίας ὑμῶν.

<sup>c</sup> Colos. ch. iii. 12—15. Ἐνδυσασθε οὖν ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἅγιοι καὶ ἠγαπημένοι, σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρῶν, χρηστότητα, ταπεινοφροσύνην, πραότητα, μακροθυμίαν· ἀνεχομενοὶ ἀλλήλων, καὶ χαρίζομενοὶ ἑαυτοῖς, ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἡμεῖς· ἐπὶ πασι δεδουλωμένοι τὴν ἀγαπὴν, ἥτις ἐστὶ συνδεσμός τῆς τελειότητος· καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Θεοῦ βραβεύειτω ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι.



together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body.”<sup>a</sup>

Colos. ch. ii. 19. “From which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”<sup>b</sup>

In these quotations are read *ἐξ οὗ παν το σωμα συμπεριβαλλόμενον* in both places: *ἐπιχορηγούμενον* answering to *ἐπιχορηγίας*: *δια τῶν ἁφῶν* to *δια πάσης ἁφῆς*: *αὐξεῖ τὴν αὐξησιν* to *ποιεῖται τὴν αὐξησιν*: and yet the sentences are considerably diversified in other parts.

Ephes. ch. iv. 32. “And be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.”<sup>c</sup>

Colos. ch. iii. 13. “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”<sup>d</sup>

Here we have “forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake (*ἐν Χριστῷ*), hath forgiven you,” in the first quotation, substantially repeated in the second. But in the second the sentence is broken by the interposition of a new clause, “if any man have a quarrel against any:” and the latter part is a little varied; instead of “God in Christ,” it is “Christ hath forgiven you.”

Ephes. ch. iv. 22—24. “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.”<sup>e</sup>

Colos. ch. iii. 9, 10. “Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.”<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Ephes. ch. iv. 16. *Ἐξ οὗ παν το σωμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβασζόμενον δια πάσης ἁφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ’ ἐνεργίαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἵνῃς ἕκαστου μέρους τὴν αὐξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται.*

<sup>b</sup> Colos. ch. ii. 19. *Ἐξ οὗ παν το σωμα δια τῶν ἁφῶν καὶ συνδέσμων ἐπιχορηγούμενον καὶ συμβιβασζόμενον, αὐξεῖ τὴν αὐξησιν τοῦ Θεοῦ.*

<sup>c</sup> Eph. ch. iv. 32. *Γίνεσθε δι’ εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί, εὐσπλαγχνοί, χαρίζομενοι ἑαυτοῖς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἡχαρίσατο ὑμῖν.*

<sup>d</sup> Colos. ch. iii. 13. *Ἀνέχομενοι ἀλλήλων, καὶ χαρίζομενοι ἑαυτοῖς, ἵαν τις πρὸς τινὰ ἰχὴ μομφῆν· καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἡχαρίσατο ὑμῖν, οὕτω καὶ ὑμεῖς.*

<sup>e</sup> Ephes. ch. iv. 22—24. *Ἀποθεσθαι ὑμᾶς κατὰ τὴν προτίραν ἀναστροφὴν, τὸν παλαιὸν ἀνθρώπον τὸν φθειρομένον κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης· ἀνανεοῦσθαι δὲ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν, καὶ ἐνδυσθᾶναι τὸν καινὸν ἀνθρώπον, τὸν κατὰ Θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας.*

<sup>f</sup> Colos. ch. iii. 9, 10. *Ἀπικδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἀνθρώπον συν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον, τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτισαντός αὐτόν.*

In these quotations, "putting off the old man, and putting on the new," appears in both. The idea is farther explained by calling it a renewal: in the one, "renewed in the spirit of your mind;" in the other, "renewed in knowledge." In both, the new man is said to be formed according to the same model; in the one, he is, "after God created in righteousness and true holiness;" in the other, "he is renewed after the image of him that created him." In a word, it is the same person writing upon a kindred subject, with the terms and ideas which he had before employed still floating in his memory<sup>a</sup>.

Ephes. ch. v. 6—8. "*Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience: be not ye therefore partakers with them; for ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light.*"<sup>b</sup>

Colos. ch. iii. 6—8. "*For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience; in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these.*"<sup>c</sup>

These verses afford a specimen of that *partial* resemblance which is only to be met with when no imitation is designed, when no studied recollection is employed, but when the mind, exercised upon the same subject, is left to the spontaneous return of such terms and phrases, as, having been used before, may happen to present themselves again. The sentiment of both passages is throughout alike: half of that sentiment, the denunciation of God's wrath, is expressed in identical words; the other half, viz. the admonition to quit their former conversation, in words entirely different.

Ephes. ch. v. 15, 16. "See then that ye walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time."<sup>d</sup>

Colos. ch. iv. 5. "Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time."<sup>e</sup>

This is another example of that mixture which we remarked of sameness and variety in the language of one writer. "Re-

<sup>a</sup> In these comparisons, we often perceive the reason why the writer, though expressing the same idea, uses a different term; namely, because the term before used is employed in the sentence under a different form: thus, in the quotations under our eye, the new man is *καινος ανθρωπος* in the Ephesians, and *τον νουν* in the Colossians; but then it is because *τον καινον* is used in the next word, *ανακαινουμενον*.

<sup>b</sup> Ephes. ch. v. 6—8. *Δια ταυτα γαρ ερχεται η οργη του Θεου επι τους υιους της απειθειας. Μη ουν γινισθε συμμιτοχοι αυτων. Ητε γαρ ποτε σκοτος, νυν δε φως εν Κυριω· ως τινα φως περιπατειτε.*

<sup>c</sup> Colos. ch. iii. 6—8. *Δι' α ερχεται η οργη του Θεου επι τους υιους της απειθειας· εν οις και υμεις περιπατησατε ποτε, οτι εζητε εν αυτοις. Νυνι δε αποθεσθε και υμεις τα παντα.*

<sup>d</sup> Ephes. ch. v. 15, 16. *Βλεπιτε ουν πως ακριβως περιπατειτε· μη ως ασφοι, αλλ' ως σοφοι, εξαγοραζομενοι τον καιρον.*

<sup>e</sup> Colos. ch. iv. 5. *Εν σοφιη περιπατειτε προς τους εξω, τον καιρον εξαγοραζομενοι.*

deeming the time," (ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τον καιρον,) is a literal repetition. "Walk not as fools, but as wise," (περιπατεῖτε μὴ ὡς ἀσσοφοι, ἀλλ' ὡς σοφοι,) answers exactly in sense, and nearly in terms, to "walk in wisdom" (ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε). Περιπατεῖτε ἀκριβῶς is a very different phrase, but is intended to convey precisely the same idea as περιπατεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς ἐξω. Ἀκριβῶς is not well rendered "circumspectly." It means what in modern speech we should call "correctly;" and when we advise a person to behave "correctly," our advice is always given with a reference "to the opinion of others," πρὸς τοὺς ἐξω. "Walk correctly, redeeming the time," *i. e.* suiting yourselves to the difficulty and ticklishness of the times in which we live, "because the days are evil."

Ephes. ch. vi. 19, 20. "And (praying) for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."<sup>a</sup>

Colos. ch. iv. 3, 4. "Withal praying also for us that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds, that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak."<sup>b</sup>

In these quotations, the phrase "as I ought to speak," (ὡς δεῖ με λαλῆσαι,) the words "utterance," (λογος,) a "mystery," (μυστηριον,) "open," (ανοιξη and ἐν ανοίξει,) are the same. "To make known the mystery of the Gospel," (γνωρισαι το μυστηριον,) answers to "make it manifest" (ἵνα φανερωσω αὐτο); "for which I am an ambassador in bonds," (ὑπὲρ οὐ πρεσβεύω ἐν ἄλυσει,) to "for which I am also in bonds," (δι' ὃ καὶ δεδεμαι.)

Ephes. ch. v. 22. "*Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord,* for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. *Husbands, love your wives,* even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or

<sup>a</sup> Ephes. ch. vi. 19, 20. Καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, ἵνα μοι δοθῇ λόγος ἐν ανοίξει τοῦ στοματός μου ἐν παρήσει, γνωρισαι το μυστηριον τοῦ ευαγγελίου, ὑπὲρ οὐ πρεσβεύω ἐν ἄλυσει, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ παρήσιασώμαι, ὡς δεῖ με λαλῆσαι.

<sup>b</sup> Colos. ch. iv. 3, 4. Προσυχόμενοι ἅμα καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν, ἵνα ὁ Θεὸς ανοίξῃ ἡμῖν θύραν τοῦ λόγου, λαλῆσαι το μυστηριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ δι' ὃ καὶ δεδεμαι, ἵνα φανερωσω αὐτο, ὡς δεῖ με λαλῆσαι.



any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself; for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* Honour thy father and thy mother, (which is the first commandment with promise,) that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth. *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.* And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: *knowing that your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.*"<sup>a</sup>

<sup>b</sup> Colos. ch. iii. 18. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your

<sup>a</sup> Ephes. ch. v. 22. Αἱ γυναῖκες, τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὑποτασσισθε, ὡς τῷ Κυρίῳ.

<sup>b</sup> Colos. ch. iii. 18. Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτασσισθε τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν, ὡς ἀνέκειν ἐν Κυρίῳ.

Ephes. Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπάτε τὰς γυναῖκας ἑαυτῶν.

Colos. Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπάτε τὰς γυναῖκας.

Ephes. Τα τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονευσὶν ὑμῶν ἐν Κυρίῳ· τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶ δίκαιον.

Colos. Τα τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονευσὶ κατὰ πάντα· τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν εὐαρεστον τῷ Κυρίῳ.

Ephes. Καὶ οἱ πατέρες, μὴ παροργίζετε τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν.

Colos. Οἱ πατέρες, μὴ ἐριφιζεῖτε\* τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν.

Ephes. Οἱ δούλοι, ὑπακούετε τοῖς κυρίοις κατὰ σάρκα μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου, ἐν ἀπλοτητί τῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν, ὡς τῷ Χριστῷ· μὴ κατ' ὀφθαλμοδουλίαν, ὡς ἀνθρωπαρισκοί, ἀλλ' ὡς δούλοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποιοῦντες τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκ ψυχῆς\* μετ' ἐννοίας δουλεύοντες ὡς τῷ Κυρίῳ, καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώποις· εἰδοὺς ὅτι ὁ ἰαν τι ἕκαστος ποιῇ ἀγαθόν, τοῦτο κομίζεται παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου, εἴτε δούλος, εἴτε ἐλεύθερος.

Colos. Οἱ δούλοι, ὑπακούετε κατὰ πάντα τοῖς κατὰ σάρκα κυρίοις, μὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοδουλίαις, ὡς ἀνθρωπαρισκοί, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀπλοτητί καρδίας, φοβούμενοι τὸν Θεόν· καὶ παν ὃ, τι ἰαν ποιῇτε, ἐκ ψυχῆς ἐργάζεσθε, ὡς τῷ Κυρίῳ, καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώποις· εἰδοὺς ὅτι ἀπὸ Κυρίου ἀπολήψεσθε τὴν ἀνταπόδοσιν τῆς κληρονομίας· τῷ γὰρ Κυρίῳ Χριστῷ δουλεύετε.

\* παροργίζετε, lectio non spernenda, GRIESBACH.

wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God; and whatever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons. Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven."

The passages marked by *Italics* in the quotation from the Ephesians, bear a strict resemblance, not only in signification but in terms, to the quotation from the Colossians. Both the words and the order of the words are in many clauses a duplicate of one another. In the Epistle to the Colossians, these passages are laid together; in that to the Ephesians, they are divided by intermediate matter, especially by a long digressive allusion to the mysterious union between Christ and his Church; which possessing, as Mr. Locke hath well observed, the mind of the apostle, from being an incidental thought, grows up into the principal subject. The affinity between these two passages in signification, in terms, and in the order of the words, is closer than can be pointed out between any parts of any two epistles in the volume.

If the reader would see how the same subject is treated by a different hand, and how distinguishable it is from the production of the same pen, let him turn to the second and third chapters of the First Epistle of St. Peter. The duties of servants, of wives, and of husbands, are enlarged upon in that Epistle, as they are in the Epistle to the Ephesians; but the subjects both occur in a different order, and the train of sentiment subjoined to each is totally unlike.

3. In two letters issuing from the same person, nearly at the same time, and upon the same general occasion, we may expect to trace the influence of association in the order in which the topics follow one another. Certain ideas universally or usually suggest others. Here the order is what we call natural, and from such an order nothing can be concluded. But when the order is arbitrary, yet alike, the concurrence indicates the effect of that principle, by which ideas, which have been once joined, commonly revisit the thoughts together. The epistles under

consideration furnish the two following remarkable instances of this species of agreement.

Ephes. ch. iv. 24. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another."<sup>a</sup>

Colos. ch. iii. 9. "Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge."<sup>b</sup>

The vice of "lying," or a correction of that vice, does not seem to bear any nearer relation to the "putting on the new man," than a reformation in any other article of morals. Yet these two ideas, we see, stand in both epistles in immediate connexion.

Ephes. ch. v. 20, 21, 22. "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another, in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."<sup>c</sup>

Colos. ch. iii. 17. "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord."<sup>d</sup>

In both these passages, submission follows giving of thanks, without any similitude in the ideas which should account for the transition.

It is not necessary to pursue the comparison between the two epistles farther. The argument which results from it stands thus: No two other epistles contain a circumstance which indicates that they were written at the same, or nearly at the same time. No two other epistles exhibit so many marks of correspondence and resemblance. If the original which we ascribe to these two epistles be the true one, that is, if they were both really written by St. Paul, and both sent to their respective

<sup>a</sup> Ephes. ch. iv. 24, 25. Και ενδύσασθαι τον καινον ανθρωπον, τον κατα Θεον κτισθεντα εν δικαιοσυνη και οσιωτητι της αληθειας· διο αποθιμειοι το ψευδος, λαλιτε αληθειαν εκαστος μετα του πλησιου αυτου· οτι εσμεν αλληλων μελη.

<sup>b</sup> Colos. ch. iii. 9. Μη ψευδισθε εις αλληλους, απεκδυσαμενοι τον παλαιον ανθρωπον, συνταις πραξισιν αυτου, και ενδυσαμενοι τον νιον, τον ανακαινουμενον εις επιγνωσιν.

<sup>c</sup> Ephes. ch. v. 20, 21, 22. Ευχαριστουντες παντοτε υπερ παντων, εν ονοματι του Κυριου ημων Ιησου Χριστου, τω Θεω και πατρι, υποτασσομενοι αλληλοις εν φοβω Θεου. Αι γυναικες, τοις ιδιοις ανδρασιν υποτασσεσθε, ως τω Κυριω.

<sup>d</sup> Colos. ch. iii. 17. Και παν ο, τι αν ποιησι, εν λογω, η εν εργω, παντα εν ονοματι Κυριου Ιησου, ευχαριστουντες τω Θεω και πατρι δι' αυτου. Αι γυναικες, υποτασσεσθε τοις ιδιοις ανδρασιν, ως ανηκει εν Κυριω.



destination by the same messenger, the similitude is, in all points, what should be expected to take place. If they were forgeries, then the mention of Tychicus in both epistles, and in a manner which shows that he either carried or accompanied both epistles, was inserted for the purpose of accounting for their similitude: or else the structure of the epistles was designedly adapted to the circumstance: or lastly, the conformity between the contents of the forgeries, and what is thus directly intimated concerning their date, was only a happy accident. Not one of these three suppositions will gain credit with a reader who peruses the epistles with attention, and who reviews the several examples we have pointed out, and the observations with which they were accompanied.

## No. II.

There is such a thing as a peculiar word or phrase cleaving, as it were, to the memory of a writer or speaker, and presenting itself to his utterance at every turn. When we observe this, we call it a *cant* word, or a *cant* phrase. It is a natural effect of habit: and would appear more frequently than it does, had not the rules of good writing taught the ear to be offended with the iteration of the same sound, and oftentimes caused us to reject, on that account, the word which offered itself first to our recollection. With a writer who, like St. Paul, either knew not these rules, or disregarded them, such words will not be avoided. The truth is, an example of this kind runs through several of his epistles, and in the epistle before us *abounds*; and that is in the word *riches*, (πλουτος,) used metaphorically as an augmentative of the idea to which it happens to be subjoined. Thus, “the *riches* of his glory,” “his *riches* in glory,” “*riches* of the glory of his inheritance,” “*riches* of the glory of this mystery,” Rom. ch. ix. 23, Ephes. ch. iii. 16, Ephes. ch. i. 18, Colos. ch. i. 27: “*riches* of his grace,” twice in the Ephesians, ch. i. 7, and ch. ii. 7; “*riches* of the full assurance of understanding,” Colos. ch. ii. 2; “*riches* of his goodness,” Rom. ch. ii. 4; “*riches* of the wisdom of God,” Rom. ch. xi. 33; “*riches* of Christ,” Ephes. ch. iii. 8. In a like sense the adjective, Rom. ch. x. 12, “*rich* unto all that call upon him;” Ephes. ch. ii. 4, “*rich* in mercy;” 1 Tim. ch. vi. 18; “*rich* in good works.” Also the adverb, Colos. ch. iii. 16, “let the word of Christ dwell in you *richly*.” This figurative use of the word, though so familiar to St. Paul, does not occur in any part of the New Testa-

ment, except once in the Epistle of St. James, ch. ii. 5, “Hath not God chosen the *poor* of this world, *rich* in faith?” where it is manifestly suggested by the antithesis. I propose the frequent, yet seemingly unaffected use of this phrase, in the epistle before us, as one internal mark of its genuineness.

### No. III.

There is another singularity in St. Paul's style, which, wherever it is found, may be deemed a badge of authenticity; because, if it were noticed, it would not, I think, be imitated, inasmuch as it almost always produces embarrassment and interruption in the reasoning. This singularity is a species of digression which may properly, I think, be denominated *going off at a word*. It is turning aside from the subject upon the occurrence of some particular word, forsaking the train of thought then in hand, and entering upon a parenthetical sentence in which that word is the prevailing term. I shall lay before the reader some examples of this, collected from the other epistles, and then propose two examples of it which are found in the Epistle to the Ephesians, 2 Cor. ch. ii. 14, at the word *savour*: “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the *savour* of his knowledge by us in every place (for we are unto God a sweet *savour* of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the *savour* of death unto death, and to the other the *savour* of life unto life; and who is sufficient for these things?) For we are not as many which corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God; in the sight of God speak we in Christ.” Again, 2 Cor. ch. iii. 1, at the word *epistle*: “Need we, as some others, *epistles* of commendation to you, or of commendation from you? (ye are our *epistle* written in our hearts, known and read of all men; forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the *epistle* of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart.)” The position of the words in the original, shows more strongly than in the translation, that it was the occurrence of the word *ἐπιστολή* which gave birth to the sentence that follows: 2 Cor. chap. iii. 1. Εἰ μὴ χρῆζομεν, ὥς τινες, συστατικῶν ἐπιστολῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἢ ἐξ ὑμῶν συστατικῶν; ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ὑμεῖς ἐστέ, ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν, γινωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγινωσκο-

μενη ὑπο παντων ανθρωπων· φανερουμενοι οτι εστε επιστολη Χριστου δια-  
κονηθεισα ὑφ' ἡμων, εγγεγραμμενη ου μελανι, αλλα πνευματι Θεου ζων-  
τος· ουκ εν πλαξι λιθιναις, αλλ' εν πλαξι καρδιας σαρκιναις.

Again, 2 Cor. ch. iii. 12, &c. at the word *vail*: "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech; and not as Moses, which put a *vail* over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same *vail* untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament, which *vail* is done away in Christ; but even unto this day, when Moses is read, the *vail* is upon their heart: nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the *vail* shall be taken away (now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty). But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not."

Who sees not that this whole allegory of the *vail* arises entirely out of the occurrence of the word, in telling us that "Moses put a *vail* over his face," and that it drew the apostle away from the proper subject of his discourse, the dignity of the office in which he was engaged? which subject he fetches up again almost in the words with which he had left it: "therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." The sentence which he had before been going on with, and in which he had been interrupted by the *vail*, was, "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech."

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, the reader will remark two instances in which the same habit of composition obtains: he will recognise the same pen. One he will find, chap. iv. 8—11, at the word *ascended*: "Wherefore he saith, When he *ascended* up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he *ascended*, what is it but that he also descended first unto the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that *ascended* up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles," &c.

The other appears, chap. v. 12—15, at the word *light*: "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret: but all things that are reprov'd, are made mani-



fest by the *light*; (for whatsoever doth make manifest is *light*; wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee *light* :) see then that ye walk circumspectly."

## No. IV.

Although it does not appear to have ever been disputed that the epistle before us was written by Saint Paul, yet it is well known that a doubt has long been entertained concerning the persons to whom it was addressed. The question is founded partly in some ambiguity in the external evidence. Marcion, a heretic of the second century, as quoted by Tertullian, a father in the beginning of the third, calls it the Epistle to the Laodiceans. From what we know of Marcion, his judgement is little to be relied upon; nor is it perfectly clear that Marcion was rightly understood by Tertullian. If, however, Marcion be brought to prove that some copies in his time gave *εν Λαοδικείᾳ* in the superscription, his testimony, if it be truly interpreted, is not diminished by his heresy; for, as Grotius observes, "*cur meâ re mentiretur nihil erat causæ.*" The name *εν Εφεσῷ*, in the first verse, upon which word singly depends the proof that the epistle was written to the Ephesians, is not read in all the manuscripts now extant. I admit, however, that the external evidence preponderates with a manifest excess on the side of the received reading. The objection, therefore, principally arises from the contents of the epistle itself, which, in many respects, militate with the supposition that it was written to the church at Ephesus. According to the history, Saint Paul had passed two whole years at Ephesus, Acts, chap. xix. 10. And in this point, viz. of Saint Paul having preached for a considerable length of time at Ephesus, the history is confirmed by the two Epistles to the Corinthians, and by the two Epistles to Timothy. "I will tarry at *Ephesus* until Pentecost," 1 Cor. ch. xvi. ver. 8. "We would not have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in *Asia*," 2 Cor. ch. i. 8. "As I besought thee to abide still at *Ephesus*, when I went into Macedonia," 1 Tim. ch. i. 3. "And in how many things he ministered to me at *Ephesus* thou knowest well," 2 Tim. ch. i. 18. I adduce these testimonies, because, had it been a competition of credit between the history and the epistle, I should have thought myself bound to have preferred the epistle. Now, every epistle which Saint Paul wrote to churches which he himself had found-

ed, or which he had visited, abounds with references, and appeals to what had passed during the time that he was present amongst them ; whereas there is not a text, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, from which we can collect that he had ever been at Ephesus at all. The two Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Galatians, the Epistle to the Philippians, and the two Epistles to the Thessalonians, are of this class ; and they are full of allusions to the apostle's history, his reception, and his conduct whilst amongst them ; the total want of which, in the epistle before us, is very difficult to account for, if it was in truth written to the church of Ephesus, in which city he had resided for so long a time. This is the first and strongest objection. But farther, the Epistle to the Colossians was addressed to a church in which Saint Paul had never been. This we infer from the first verse of the second chapter : " For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." There could be no propriety in thus joining the Colossians and Laodiceans with those " who had not seen his face in the flesh," if they did not also belong to the same description<sup>a</sup>. Now, his address to the Colossians, whom he had not visited, is precisely the same as his address to the Christians, to whom he wrote in the epistle which we are now considering : " We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, *since we heard of your faith* in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints," Col. ch. i. 3. Thus, he speaks to the Colossians, in the epistle before us, as follows : " Wherefore I also, *after I heard of your faith* in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you in my prayers," chap. i. 15. The terms of this address are observable. The words " having *heard* of your faith and love," are the very words, we see, which he uses towards strangers ; and it is not probable that he should employ the same in accosting a church in which he had long exercised his ministry, and whose " faith and love" he must have personally known<sup>b</sup>. The Epistle to the Romans was

<sup>a</sup> Dr. Lardner contends against the validity of this conclusion ; but, I think, without success. LARDNER, vol. xiv. p. 473, edit. 1757.

<sup>b</sup> Mr. Locke endeavours to avoid this difficulty, by explaining "*their faith*," of which St. Paul had heard," to mean the stedfastness of their persuasion that they were called into the kingdom of God, without subjection to the Mosaic institution. But this interpretation seems to me extremely *hard* ; for, in the manner in which faith is here joined with love, in the expression, " your faith and love," it could not be meant to denote any particular tenet which distinguished one set of Chris-

written before Saint Paul had been at Rome; and his address to them runs in the same strain with that just now quoted: "I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all, that your faith is *spoken* of throughout the whole world:" Rom. ch. i. 8. Let us now see what was the form in which our apostle was accustomed to introduce his epistles, when he wrote to those with whom he was already acquainted. To the Corinthians it was this: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Christ Jesus," 1 Cor. ch. i. 4. To the Philippians: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you," Phil. ch. i. 3. To the Thessalonians: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love," 1 Thess. ch. i. 3. To Timothy: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day," 2 Tim. ch. i. 3. In these quotations, it is usually his *remembrance*, and never his *hearing* of them, which he makes the subject of his thankfulness to God.

As great difficulties stand in the way supposing the epistle before us to have been written to the church of Ephesus, so I think it probable that it is actually the Epistle to the Laodiceans, referred to in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians. The text which contains that reference is this: "When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea," ch. iv. 16. The "*epistle from Laodicea*" was an epistle sent by Saint Paul to that church, and by them transmitted to Colosse. The two churches were mutually to communicate the epistles they had received. This is the way in which the direction is explained by the greater part of commentators, and is the most probable sense that can be given to it. It is also probable that the epistle alluded to was an epistle which had been received by the church of Laodicea *lately*. It appears then, with a considerable degree of evidence, that there existed an epistle of Saint Paul's nearly of the same date with the Epistle to the Colossians, and an epistle directed to a church (for such the church of Laodicea was) in which Saint Paul had never been. What has been observed concerning the epistle before us, shows that it answers perfectly to that character.

tians from others; forasmuch as the expression describes the general virtues of the Christian profession. Vide LOCKE in loc.



Nor does the mistake seem very difficult to account for. Whoever inspects the map of Asia Minor will see, that a person proceeding from Rome to Laodicea would probably land at Ephesus, as the nearest frequented sea-port in that direction. Might not Tychicus then, in passing through Ephesus, communicate to the Christians of that place the letter with which he was charged? And might not copies of that letter be multiplied and preserved at Ephesus? Might not some of the copies drop the words of designation *εν τη Λαοδικειᾳ*<sup>a</sup>, which it was of no consequence to an Ephesian to retain? Might not copies of the letter come out into the Christian church at large from Ephesus; and might not this give occasion to a belief that the letter was written to that church? And lastly, might not this belief produce the error which we suppose to have crept into the inscription?

#### No. V.

As our epistle purports to have been written during St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome, which lies beyond the period to which the Acts of the Apostles brings up his history; and as we have seen and acknowledged that the epistle contains no reference to any transaction at Ephesus during the apostle's residence in that city, we cannot expect that it should supply many marks of agreement with the narrative. One coincidence however occurs, and a coincidence of that minute and less obvious kind, which, as hath been repeatedly observed, is of all others the most to be relied upon.

Chap. vi. 19, 20, we read, "praying for me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds." "*In bonds*," *εν αλυσει*, in a *chain*. In the twenty-eighth chapter of the Acts we are

<sup>a</sup> And it is remarkable that there seem to have been some ancient copies without the words of designation, either the words *in Ephesus*, or the words *in Laodicea*. St. Basil, a writer of the fourth century, speaking of the present epistle, has this very singular passage: "And writing to the Ephesians, as truly united to him who is through knowledge, he (Paul) calleth them in a peculiar sense *such who are*; saying to the saints who are and (or even) the faithful in Christ Jesus; for so those before us have transmitted it, and we have found it in ancient copies." Dr. Mill interprets (and, notwithstanding some objections that have been made to him, in my opinion rightly interprets) these words of Basil, as declaring that his father had seen certain copies of the epistle in which the words "*in Ephesus*" were wanting. And the passage, I think, must be considered as Basil's fanciful way of explaining what was really a corrupt and defective reading; for I do not believe it possible that the author of the epistle could have originally written *αγιοις τοις ουσιν*, without any name of place to follow it.

informed, that Paul, after his arrival at Rome, was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him. Dr. Lardner has shown that this mode of custody was in use amongst the Romans, and that whenever it was adopted, the prisoner was bound to the soldier by a single chain : in reference to which St. Paul, in the twentieth verse of this chapter, tells the Jews, whom he had assembled, “ For this cause, therefore, have I called for you to see you, and to speak with you, because that for the hope of Israel I am bound *with this chain*,” τὴν ἄλυσιν ταυτην περικειμαι. It is in exact conformity therefore with the truth of St. Paul’s situation at the time, that he declares of himself in the epistle, *πρεσβευω ἐν ἄλυσει*. And the exactness is the more remarkable, as ἄλυσις (a chain) is nowhere used in the singular number to express any other kind of custody. When the prisoner’s hands or feet were bound together, the word was *δεσμοί*, (bonds,) as in the twenty-sixth chapter of the Acts, where Paul replies to Agrippa, “ I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except *these bonds*,” *παρεκτος των δεσμων τουτων*. When the prisoner was confined between two soldiers, as in the case of Peter, Acts, chap. xii. 6, two chains were employed; and it is said upon his miraculous deliverance, that the “ chains” (ἄλυσεις, in the plural) “ fell from his hands.” Δεσμος the noun, and δεσμαι the verb, being general terms, were applicable to this in common with any other species of personal coercion; but ἄλυσις, in the singular number, to none but this.

If it can be suspected that the writer of the present epistle, who in no other particular appears to have availed himself of the information concerning St. Paul, delivered in the Acts, had, in this verse, borrowed the word which he read in that book, and had adapted his expression to what he found there recorded of St. Paul’s treatment at Rome; in short, that the coincidence here noted was effected by craft and design; I think it a strong reply to remark, that, in the parallel passage of the Epistle to the Colossians, the same allusion is not preserved: the words there are, “ praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, for which *I am also in bonds*,” δι’ ὃ καὶ δεσμαι. After what has been shown in a preceding number, there can be little doubt but that these two epistles were written by the same person. If the writer, therefore, sought for, and fraudulently inserted, the correspondency into one epistle, why did he not do it in the other? A real pri-

soner might use either general words which comprehended this amongst many other modes of custody; or might use appropriate words which specified this, and distinguished it from any other mode. It would be accidental which form of expression he fell upon. But an impostor, who had the art, in one place, to employ the appropriate term for the purpose of fraud, would have used it in both places.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

#### No. I.

WHEN a transaction is referred to in such a manner, as that the reference is easily and immediately understood by those who are beforehand, or from other quarters acquainted with the fact, but is obscure, or imperfect, or requires investigation, or a comparison of different parts, in order to be made clear to other readers, the transaction so referred to is probably real; because, had it been fictitious, the writer would have set forth his story more fully and plainly, not merely as conscious of the fiction, but as conscious that his readers could have no other knowledge of the subject of his allusion than from the information of which he put them in possession.

The account of Epaphroditus, in the Epistle to the Philippians, of his journey to Rome, and of the business which brought him thither, is the article to which I mean to apply this observation. There are three passages in the epistle which relate to this subject. The first, chap. i. 7, "Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye all are *συγκοινωνοι μου της χαριτος*, joint contributors to the gift which I have received."<sup>a</sup> Nothing more is said in this place. In the latter part of the second chapter, and at the distance of half the epistle from the last quotation, the subject appears again; "Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour, and

<sup>a</sup> Pearce, I believe, was the first commentator, who gave this sense to the expression; and I believe also, that his exposition is now generally assented to. He interprets in the same sense the phrase in the fifth verse, which our translation renders "your fellowship in the Gospel; but which in the original is not *κοινωνια του ευαγγελιου*, οτ *κοινωνια εν τω ευαγγελιω*; but *κοινωνια εις το ευαγγελιον*.



fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and *he that ministered to my wants* : for he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick : for indeed he was sick nigh unto death ; but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that when ye see him again ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness ; and hold such in reputation : because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life *to supply your lack of service toward me.*" Chap. ii. 25—30. The matter is here dropped, and no farther mention made of it till it is taken up near the conclusion of the epistle as follows : " But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again, wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want ; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound ; every where and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift : but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound : I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you." Chap. iv. 10—18. To the Philippian reader, who knew that contributions were wont to be made in that church for the apostle's subsistence and relief, that the supply which they were accustomed to send to him had been delayed by the want of opportunity, that Epaphroditus had undertaken the charge of conveying their liberality to the hands of the apostle, that he had acquitted himself of this commission at the peril of his life, by hastening to Rome under the oppression of a grievous sickness ; to a reader who knew all this beforehand, every line in the above quotations would be plain and clear. But how is it with a stranger ? The knowledge of these several particulars is necessary to the perception and explanation of the references ; yet that knowledge must be gathered

from a comparison of passages lying at a great distance from one another. Texts must be interpreted by texts long subsequent to them, which necessarily produces embarrassment and suspense. The passage quoted from the beginning of the epistle contains an acknowledgement, on the part of the apostle, of the liberality which the Philippians had exercised towards him; but the allusion is so general and indeterminate, that, had nothing more been said in the sequel of the epistle, it would hardly have been applied to this occasion at all. In the second quotation, Epaphroditus is declared to have "ministered to the apostle's wants," and "to have supplied their lack of service towards him;" but *how*, that is, at whose expense, or from what fund he "ministered," or what was "the lack of service" which he supplied, are left very much unexplained, till we arrive at the third quotation, where we find that Epaphroditus "ministered to Saint Paul's wants," only by conveying to his hands the contributions of the Philippians: "I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you:" and that "the lack of service which he supplied" was a delay or interruption of their accustomed bounty, occasioned by the want of opportunity: "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." The affair at length comes out clear; but it comes out by piecemeal. The clearness is the result of the reciprocal illustration of divided texts. Should any one choose therefore to insinuate, that this whole story of Epaphroditus, or his journey, his errand, his sickness, or even his existence, might, for what we know, have no other foundation than in the invention of the forger of the epistle; I answer, that a forger would have set forth his story connectedly, and also more fully and more perspicuously. If the epistle be authentic, and the transaction real, then every thing which is said concerning Epaphroditus and his commission, would be clear to those into whose hands the epistle was expected to come. Considering the Philippians as his readers, a person might naturally write upon the subject, as the author of the epistle has written; but there is no supposition of forgery with which it will suit.

## No. II.

The history of Epaphroditus supplies another observation: "Indeed he was sick, nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have

sorrow upon sorrow." In this passage, no intimation is given that Epaphroditus's recovery was miraculous. It is plainly, I think, spoken of as a natural event. This instance, together with one in the Second Epistle to Timothy, ("Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick,") affords a proof that the power of performing cures, and, by parity of reason, of working other miracles, was a power which only visited the apostles occasionally, and did not at all depend upon their own will. Paul undoubtedly would have healed Epaphroditus if he could. Nor, if the power of working cures had awaited his disposal, would he have left his fellow-traveller at Miletum sick. This, I think, is a fair observation upon the instances adduced; but it is not the observation I am concerned to make. It is more for the purpose of my argument to remark, that forgery, upon such an occasion, would not have spared a miracle; much less would it have introduced Saint Paul professing the utmost anxiety for the safety of his friend, yet acknowledging himself unable to help him; which he does, almost expressly, in the case of Trophimus, for he "left him sick;" and virtually in the passage before us, in which he felicitates himself upon the recovery of Epaphroditus, in terms which almost exclude the supposition of any supernatural means being employed to effect it. This is a reserve which nothing but truth would have imposed.

### No. III.

Chap. iv. 15, 16. "Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity."

It will be necessary to state the Greek of this passage, because our translation does not, I think, give the sense of it accurately.

Οἰδᾶτε δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς, Φιλιππησιοὶ, ὅτι ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ὅτε ἐξηλθον ἀπο Μακεδονίας, οὐδεμία μοι ἐκκλησία ἐκοινῶνησεν, εἰς λόγον δόσεως, καὶ ληψέως, εἰ μὴ ὑμεῖς μόνοι· ὅτι καὶ ἐν Θεσσαλονικῇ καὶ ἅπαξ καὶ δις εἰς τὴν χρεῖαν μοι ἐπεμψάτε.

The reader will please to direct his attention to the corresponding particulars ὅτι and ὅτι καὶ, which connect the words ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ὅτε ἐξηλθον ἀπο Μακεδονίας, with the words ἐν Θεσσαλονικῇ, and denote, as I interpret the passage, two dis-



tinct donations, or rather, donations at two distinct periods, one at Thessalonica, ἀπαξ και δις, the other after his departure from Macedonia, ὅτε ἐξηλθον απο Μακεδονιας<sup>a</sup>. I would render the passage so as to mark these different periods, thus: "Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I was departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. And that also in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity." Now with this exposition of the passage compare 2 Cor. chap. xi. 8, 9: "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service. And when I was present with you and wanted, I was chargeable to no man; for that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied."

It appears from St. Paul's history, as related in the Acts of the Apostles, that upon leaving Macedonia he passed, after a very short stay at Athens, into Achaia. It appears, secondly, from the quotation out of the Epistle to the Corinthians, that in Achaia he accepted no pecuniary assistance from the converts of that country; but that he drew a supply for his wants from the Macedonian Christians. Agreeably whereunto it appears, in the third place, from the text which is the subject of the present number, that the brethren in Philippi, a city of Macedonia, had followed him with their munificence, ὅτε ἐξηλθον απο Μακεδονιας, when he was departed from Macedonia, that is, when he was *come into Achaia*.

The passage under consideration affords another circumstance of agreement deserving of our notice. The gift alluded to in the Epistle to the Philippians is stated to have been made "in the beginning of the Gospel." This phrase is most naturally explained to signify the first preaching of the Gospel in these parts; viz. on that side of the Ægean Sea. The succours referred to in the Epistle to the Corinthians, as received from Macedonia, are stated to have been received by him upon his first visit to the peninsula of Greece. The dates therefore assigned to the donation in the two epistles agree; yet is the date in one ascertained very incidentally, namely, by the considerations which

<sup>a</sup> Luke, ch. ii. 15. Καὶ ἐγένετο, ὡς ἀπῆλθον ἀπ' αὐτῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν οἱ ἀγγέλοι, "as the angels were gone away," i. e. *after* their departure, οἱ ποιμένες εἰπον πρὸς ἀλλήλους. Matt. ch. xii. 43. Ὅταν δὲ τὸ ἀκαθάρτον πνεῦμα ἐξέλθῃ ἀπο τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, "when the unclean spirit is gone," i. e. *after* his departure, διερχεται. John, ch. xiii. 30. Ὅτε ἐγήλθῃ (Ἰουδᾶς) "when he was gone," i. e. *after* his departure, λέγει Ἰησοῦς. Acts, ch. x. 7, ὡς δὲ ἀπῆλθιν ὁ ἀγγέλος ὁ λαλῶν τῷ Κορνηλίῳ, "and when the angel which spake unto him was departed," i. e. *after* his departure, φωνήσας δύο τῶν οἰκιστῶν, &c.

fix the date of the epistle itself; and in the other, by an expression ("the beginning of the Gospel") much too general to have been used if the text had been penned with any view to the correspondency we are remarking.

Farther, the phrase, "in the *beginning* of the Gospel," raises an idea in the reader's mind that the Gospel had been preached there more than once. The writer would hardly have called the visit to which he refers the "beginning of the Gospel," if he had not also visited them in some other stage of it. The fact corresponds with this idea. If we consult the sixteenth and twentieth chapters of the Acts, we shall find, that St. Paul, before his imprisonment at Rome, during which this epistle purports to have been written, had been *twice* in Macedonia, and each time at Philippi.

#### No. IV.

That Timothy had been long with St. Paul at Philippi is a fact which seems to be implied in this epistle twice. First, he joins in the salutation with which the epistle opens: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi." Secondly, and more directly, the point is inferred from what is said concerning him, chap. ii. 19: "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state; for I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state; for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's; but *ye know the proof of him*, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the Gospel." Had Timothy's presence with St. Paul at Philippi, when he preached the Gospel there, been expressly remarked in the Acts of the Apostles, this quotation might be thought to contain a contrived adaptation to the history; although, even in that case, the averment, or rather the allusion in the epistle, is too oblique to afford much room for such suspicion. But the truth is, that in the history of St. Paul's transactions at Philippi, which occupies the greatest part of the sixteenth chapter of the Acts, no mention is made of Timothy at all. What appears concerning Timothy in the history, so far as relates to the present subject, is this: "When Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, behold a certain disciple was there named Timotheus, whom Paul would have to go forth with him." The narrative then proceeds with

the account of St. Paul's progress through various provinces of the Lesser Asia, till it brings him down to Troas. At Troas he was warned in a vision to pass over into Macedonia. In obedience to which he crossed the Ægean Sea to Samothracia, the next day to Neapolis, and from thence to Philippi. His preaching, miracles, and persecutions at Philippi, follow next: after which Paul and his company, when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, came to Thessalonica, and from Thessalonica to Berea. From Berea the brethren sent away Paul; "but Silas and *Timotheus* abode there still." The itinerary, of which the above is an abstract, is undoubtedly sufficient to support an inference that Timothy was along with St. Paul at Philippi. We find them setting out together upon this progress from Derbe, in Lycaonia; we find them together near the conclusion of it, at Berea in Macedonia. It is highly probable, therefore, that they came together to Philippi, through which their route between these two places lay. If this be thought probable, it is sufficient. For what I wish to be observed is, that in comparing, upon this subject, the epistle with the history, we do not find a recital in one place of what is related in another; but that we find, what is much more to be relied upon, an oblique allusion to an implied fact.

#### No. V.

Our epistle purports to have been written near the conclusion of St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome, and after a residence in that city of considerable duration. These circumstances are made out by different intimations, and the intimations upon the subject preserve among themselves a just consistency, and a consistency certainly unmeditated. First, the apostle had already been a prisoner at Rome so long, as that the reputation of his bonds, and of his constancy under them, had contributed to advance the success of the Gospel: "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." Secondly, the account given of Epaphroditus imports, that St. Paul, when he wrote the epistle, had been in Rome a considerable time: "He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness,



because that ye had heard that he had been sick." Epaphroditus was with St. Paul at Rome. He had been sick. The Philippians had heard of his sickness, and he again had received an account how much they had been affected by the intelligence. The passing and repassing of these advices must necessarily have occupied a large portion of time, and must have all taken place during St. Paul's residence at Rome. Thirdly, after a residence at Rome thus proved to have been of considerable duration, he now regards the decision of his fate as nigh at hand. He contemplates either alternative, that of his deliverance, ch. ii. 23, "Him therefore (Timothy) I hope to send *presently*, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me; but I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly :—" that of his condemnation, ver. 17, "Yea, and if I be offered<sup>a</sup> upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." This consistency is material, if the consideration of it be confined to the epistle. It is farther material, as it agrees with respect to the duration of St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, with the account delivered in the Acts, which, having brought the apostle to Rome, closes the history by telling us "that he dwelt there *two whole years* in his own hired house."

### No. VI.

Chap. i. 23. "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."

With this compare 2 Cor. chap. v. 8: "We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

The sameness of sentiment in these two quotations is obvious. I rely however not so much upon that, as upon the similitude in the train of thought which in each epistle leads up to this sentiment, and upon the suitableness of that train of thought to the circumstances under which the epistles purport to have been written. This, I conceive, bespeaks the production of the same mind, and of a mind operating upon real circumstances. The sentiment is in both places preceded by the contemplation of imminent personal danger. To the Philippians he writes, in the twentieth verse of this chapter, "According to my earnest

<sup>a</sup> ἅλλ' εἰ καὶ σπενδομαι ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, if my blood be poured out as a libation upon the sacrifice of your faith.

expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, *so now also*, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." To the Corinthians, "Troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." This train of reflection is continued to the place from whence the words which we compare are taken. The two epistles, though written at different times, from different places, and to different churches, were both written under circumstances which would naturally recall to the author's mind the precarious condition of his life, and the perils which constantly awaited him. When the Epistle to the Philippians was written, the author was a prisoner at Rome, expecting his trial. When the Second Epistle to the Corinthians was written, he had lately escaped a danger in which he had given himself over for lost. The epistle opens with a recollection of this subject, and the impression accompanied the writer's thoughts throughout.

I know that nothing is easier than to transplant into a forged epistle a sentiment or expression which is found in a true one; or, supposing both epistles to be forged by the same hand, to insert the same sentiment or expression in both. But the difficulty is to introduce it in just and close connexion with a train of thought going before, and with a train of thought apparently generated by the circumstances under which the epistle is written. In two epistles, purporting to be written on different occasions, and in different periods of the author's history, this propriety would not easily be managed.

#### No. VII.

Chap. i. 29, 30; ii. 1, 2. "For unto you is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which *ye saw in me*, and now hear to be in me. If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

With this compare Acts xvi. 22: "And the multitude (at Philippi) rose up against them (Paul and Silas); and the ma-

gistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them ; and when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely : who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks."

The passage in the epistle is very remarkable. I know not an example in any writing of a juster pathos, or which more truly represents the workings of a warm and affectionate mind, than what is exhibited in the quotation before us <sup>a</sup>. The apostle reminds his Philippians of their being joined with himself in the endurance of persecution for the sake of Christ. He conjures them by the ties of their common profession and their common sufferings, to " fulfil his joy ;" to complete, by the unity of their faith, and by their mutual love, that joy with which the instances he had received of their zeal and attachment had inspired his breast. Now if this was the real effusion of St. Paul's mind, of which it bears the strongest internal character, then we have in the words " the same conflict which ye saw in me," an authentic confirmation of so much of the apostle's history in the Acts, as relates to his transactions at Philippi ; and, through that, of the intelligence and general fidelity of the historian.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

#### No. I.

THERE is a circumstance of conformity between St. Paul's history and his letters, especially those which were written during his first imprisonment at Rome, and more especially the epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians, which being too close to be accounted for from accident, yet too indirect and latent to be imputed to design, cannot easily be resolved into any other original than truth. Which circumstance is this, that St. Paul in these epistles attributes his imprisonment not to his preaching of Christianity, but to his asserting the right of the Gentiles to be admitted into it without conforming themselves to the Jewish law. This was the doctrine to which he considered himself as

<sup>a</sup> The original is very spirited : *Εἰ τις οὐκ παρακλήσῃς ἐν Χριστῷ, εἰ τι παραμυθίον ἀγάπης, εἰ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος, εἰ τίνα σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοὶ, πληρώσατε μου τὴν χάραν.*



a martyr. Thus, in the epistle before us, chap. i. 24. (I Paul) "who now rejoice in my sufferings for you"—"*for you*," i. e. for those whom he had never seen; for a few verses afterwards he adds, "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you and for them in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." His suffering therefore for *them* was, in their general capacity of Gentile Christians, agreeably to what he explicitly declares in his Epistle to the Ephesians, iv. 1: "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, *for you Gentiles*." Again in the epistle now under consideration, iv. 3: "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the *mystery* of Christ, for which I am also in bonds." What that "*mystery of Christ*" was, the Epistle to the Ephesians distinctly informs us: "Whereby when ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the *mystery of Christ*, which, in other ages, was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel*." This, therefore, was the *confession* for which he declares himself to be in bonds. Now let us inquire how the occasion of St. Paul's imprisonment is represented in the history. The apostle had not long returned to Jerusalem from his second visit into Greece, when an uproar was excited in that city by the clamour of certain Asiatic Jews, who, "having seen Paul in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him." The charge advanced against him was, that "he taught all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place; and farther brought Greeks also into the temple, and polluted that holy place." The former part of the charge seems to point at the doctrine, which he maintained, of the admission of the Gentiles, under the new dispensation, to an indiscriminate participation of God's favour with the Jews. But what follows makes the matter clear. When, by the interference of the chief captain, Paul had been rescued out of the hands of the populace, and was permitted to address the multitude who had followed him to the stairs of the castle, he delivered a brief account of his birth, of the early course of his life, of his miraculous conversion; and is proceeding in this narrative, until he comes to describe a vision which was presented to him, as he was praying in the temple; and which bid him depart out of Jerusalem, "for I will send thee far hence *unto the Gentiles*."

Acts xxii. 21. "They gave him audience," says the historian, "*unto this word*; and then lift up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth!" Nothing can show more strongly than this account does, what was the offence which drew down upon St. Paul the vengeance of his countrymen. His mission to the Gentiles, and his open avowal of that mission, was the intolerable part of the apostle's crime. But although the real motive of the prosecution appears to have been the apostle's conduct towards the Gentiles; yet, when his accusers came before a Roman magistrate, a charge was to be framed of a more legal form. The profanation of the temple was the article they chose to rely upon. This, therefore, became the immediate subject of Tertullus's oration before Felix, and of Paul's defence. But that he all along considered his ministry amongst the Gentiles as the actual source of the enmity that had been exercised against him, and in particular as the cause of the insurrection in which his person had been seized, is apparent from the conclusion of his discourse before Agrippa; "I have appeared unto thee," says he, describing what passed upon his journey to Damascus, "for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but showed first unto them of Damascus, and of Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. *For these causes* the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me." The seizing, therefore, of St. Paul's person, from which he was never discharged till his final liberation at Rome, and of which, therefore, his imprisonment at Rome was the continuation and effect, was not in consequence of any general persecution set on foot against Christianity; nor did it befall him simply as professing or teaching Christ's religion, which James and the elders at Jerusalem did as well as he, (and yet, for any thing that appears, remained at that time unmolested;) but it was distinctly and specifically brought upon him by his activity in preaching to

the Gentiles, and by his placing them upon a level with the once-favoured and still self-flattered posterity of Abraham. How well St. Paul's letters, purporting to be written during this imprisonment, agree with this account of its cause and origin, we have already seen.

## No. II.

Chap. iv. 10. "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments : If he come unto you, receive him;) and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision."

We find Aristarchus as a companion of our apostle in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts, and the twenty-ninth verse: "And the whole city of Ephesus was filled with confusion; and having caught Gaius and *Aristarchus*, men of Macedonia, *Paul's companions in travel*, they rushed with one accord into the theatre." And we find him upon his journey with St. Paul to Rome, in the twenty-seventh chapter, and the second verse: "And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus's band: and, entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coast of Asia; one *Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us*." But might not the author of the epistle have consulted the history; and, observing that the historian had brought Aristarchus along with Paul to Rome, might he not for that reason, and without any other foundation, have put down his name amongst the salutations of an epistle purporting to be written by the apostle from that place? I allow so much of possibility to this objection, that I should not have proposed this in the number of coincidences clearly undesigned, had Aristarchus stood alone. The observation that strikes me in reading the passage is, that together with Aristarchus, whose journey to Rome we trace in the history, are joined Marcus and Justus, of whose coming to Rome the history says nothing. Aristarchus alone appears in the history, and Aristarchus alone would have appeared in the epistle, if the author had regulated himself by that conformity. Or if you take it the other way; if you suppose the history to have been made out of the epistle, why the journey of Aristarchus to Rome should be recorded, and not that of Marcus and Justus, if the groundwork of the



narrative was the appearance of Aristarchus's name in the epistle, seems to be unaccountable.

"Marcus, *sister's son* to Barnabas." Does not this hint account for Barnabas's adherence to Mark in the contest that arose with our apostle concerning him? "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do; and *Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark*; but Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from Pamphilia, and went not with them to the work; and the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark and sailed unto Cyprus." The history which records the dispute has not preserved the circumstance of Mark's relationship to Barnabas. It is nowhere noticed but in the text before us. As far, therefore, as it applies, the application is certainly undesigned.

"*Sister's son* to Barnabas." This woman, the mother of Mark, and the sister of Barnabas, was, as might be expected, a person of some eminence amongst the Christians of Jerusalem. It so happens that we hear of her in the history. "When Peter was delivered from prison, he came to the house of *Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark*, where many were gathered together praying." Acts xii. 12. There is somewhat of coincidence in this; somewhat bespeaking real transactions amongst real persons.

### No. III.

The following coincidence, though it bear the appearance of great nicety and refinement, ought not, perhaps, to be deemed imaginary. In the salutations with which this, like most of St. Paul's epistles, concludes, we have "Aristarchus and Marcus, and Jesus, which is called Justus, *who are of the circumcision*," iv. 10, 11. Then follow also, "Epaphras, Luke the beloved physician, and Demas." Now, as this description, "who are of the circumcision," is added after the first three names, it is inferred, not without great appearance of probability, that the rest, amongst whom is Luke, were not of the circumcision. Now can we discover any expression in the Acts of the Apostles, which ascertains whether the author of the book was a Jew or not? If we can discover that he was not a

Jew, we fix a circumstance in his character which coincides with what is here, indirectly indeed, but not very uncertainly, intimated concerning Luke: and we so far confirm both the testimony of the primitive church, that the Acts of the Apostles was written by St. Luke, and the general reality of the persons and circumstances brought together in this epistle. The text in the Acts, which has been construed to show that the writer was not a Jew, is the nineteenth verse of the first chapter, where, in describing the field which had been purchased with the reward of Judas's iniquity, it is said, "that it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called, in *their* proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood." These words are by most commentators taken to be the words and observation of the historian, and not a part of St. Peter's speech, in the midst of which they are found. If this be admitted, then it is argued that the expression, "in *their* proper tongue," would not have been used by a Jew, but is suitable to the pen of a Gentile writing concerning Jews<sup>a</sup>. The reader will judge of the probability of this conclusion, and we urge the coincidence no farther than that probability extends. The coincidence, if it be one, is so remote from all possibility of design, that nothing need be added to satisfy the reader upon that part of the argument.

#### No. IV.

Chap. iv. 9. "With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, *who is one of you*."

Observe how it may be made out that Onesimus was a Colossian. Turn to the Epistle to Philemon, and you will find that Onesimus was the servant or slave of Philemon. The question therefore will be, to what city Philemon belonged? In the epistle addressed to him this is not declared. It appears only that he was of the same place, whatever that place was, with an eminent Christian named Archippus. "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved and fellow-labourer; and to our beloved Apphia, and *Archippus* our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house." Now turn back to the Epistle to the Colossians, and you will find Archippus saluted by name amongst the Christians of that church. "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which

<sup>a</sup> Vide Benson's Dissertation, vol. i. p. 318, of his Works, ed. 1756.

thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (iv. 17). The necessary result is, that Onesimus also was of the same city, agreeably to what is said of him, "he is one of you." And this result is the effect either of truth, which produces consistency without the writer's thought or care, or of a contexture of forgeries confirming and falling in with one another by a species of fortuity of which I know no example. The supposition of design, I think, is excluded, not only because the purpose to which the design must have been directed, viz. the verification of the passage in our epistle, in which it is said concerning Onesimus, "he is one of you," is a purpose, which would be lost upon ninety-nine readers out of a hundred; but because the means made use of are too circuitous to have been the subject of affectation and contrivance. Would a forger, who had this purpose in view, have left his readers to hunt it out, by going forward and backward from one epistle to another, in order to connect Onesimus with Philemon, Philemon with Archippus, and Archippus with Colosse? all which he must do before he arrives at his discovery, that it was truly said of Onesimus, "he is one of you."

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

#### No. I.

It is known to every reader of Scripture that the First Epistle to the Thessalonians speaks of the coming of Christ in terms which indicate an expectation of his speedy appearance: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that *we* which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then *we which are alive and remain* shall be caught up together with them in the clouds—But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." (Chap. iv. 15, 16, 17; ch. v. 4).

Whatever other construction these texts may bear, the idea they leave upon the mind of an ordinary reader, is that of the author of the epistle looking for the day of judgement to take place in his own time, or near to it. Now the use which I



make of this circumstance, is to deduce from it a proof that the epistle itself was not the production of a subsequent age. Would an impostor have given this expectation to St. Paul, after experience had proved it to be erroneous? or would he have put into the apostle's mouth, or, which is the same thing, into writings purporting to come from his hand, expressions, if not necessarily conveying, at least easily interpreted to convey, an opinion which was then known to be founded in mistake? I state this as an argument to show that the epistle was contemporary with St. Paul, which is little less than to show that it actually proceeded from his pen. For I question whether any ancient forgeries were executed in the life-time of the person whose name they bear; nor was the primitive situation of the church likely to give birth to such an attempt.

## No. II.

Our epistle concludes with a direction that it should be publicly read in the church to which it was addressed: "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." The existence of this clause in the body of the epistle is an evidence of its authenticity; because to produce a letter purporting to have been publicly read in the church of Thessalonica, when no such letter in truth had been read or heard of in that church, would be to produce an imposture destructive of itself. At least, it seems unlikely that the author of an imposture would voluntarily and even officiously, afford a handle to so plain an objection.—Either the epistle was publicly read in the church of Thessalonica during St. Paul's life-time, or it was not. If it was, no publication could be more authentic, no species of notoriety more unquestionable, no method of preserving the integrity of the copy more secure. If it was not, the clause we produce would remain a standing condemnation of the forgery, and one would suppose, an invincible impediment to its success.

If we connect this article with the preceding, we shall perceive that they combine into one strong proof of the genuineness of the epistle. The preceding article carries up the date of the epistle to the time of St. Paul; the present article fixes the publication of it to the church of Thessalonica. Either therefore the church of Thessalonica was imposed upon by a false epistle, which in St. Paul's life-time they received and read

publicly as his, carrying on a communication with him all the while, and the epistle referring to the continuance of that communication ; or other Christian churches, in the same life-time of the apostle, received an epistle purporting to have been publicly read in the church of Thessalonica, which nevertheless had not been heard of in that church ; or, lastly, the conclusion remains, that the epistle now in our hands is genuine.

### No. III.

Between our epistle and the history the accordancy in many points is circumstantial and complete. The history relates, that, after Paul and Silas had been beaten with many stripes at Philippi, shut up in the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, as soon as they were discharged from their confinement they departed from thence, and, when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, came to Thessalonica, where Paul opened and alleged that Jesus was the Christ ; Acts xvi. 23, &c. The epistle written in the name of Paul and Sylvanus (Silas), and of Timotheus, who also appears to have been along with them at Philippi, (vide Phil. No. IV.,) speaks to the church of Thessalonica thus : “ Even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God with much contention.” (ii. 2.)

The history relates, that after they had been some time at Thessalonica, “ the Jews who believed not set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason where Paul and Silas were, and sought to bring them out to the people.” Acts xvii. 5. The epistle declares, “ when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation ; even *as it came to pass, and ye know.*” (iii. 4.)

The history brings Paul and Silas and Timothy together at Corinth, soon after the preaching of the Gospel at Thessalonica : —“ And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, (to Corinth,) Paul was pressed in spirit.” Acts xviii. 5. The epistle is written in the name of these three persons, who consequently must have been together at the time, and speaks throughout of their ministry at Thessalonica as a recent transaction : “ We, brethren, *being taken from you for a short time*, in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face, with great desire.” (ii. 17.)

The harmony is indubitable ; but the points of history in

which it consists are so expressly set forth in the narrative, and so directly referred to in the epistle, that it becomes necessary for us to show that the facts in one writing were not copied from the other. Now amidst some minuter discrepancies, which will be noticed below, there is one circumstance which mixes itself with all the allusions in the epistle, but does not appear in the history any where; and that is of a visit which St. Paul had intended to pay to the Thessalonians during the time of his residing at Corinth: "Wherefore we would have come unto you (even I Paul) once and again; but Satan hindered us." (ii. 18.) "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith. Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." (iii. 10, 11.) Concerning a design which was not executed, although the person himself, who was conscious of his own purpose, should make mention in his letters, nothing is more probable than that his historian should be silent, if not ignorant. The author of the epistle could not, however, have learnt this circumstance from the history, for it is not there to be met with; nor, if the historian had drawn his materials from the epistle, is it likely that he would have passed over a circumstance, which is amongst the most obvious and prominent of the facts to be collected from that source of information.

#### No. IV.

Chap. iii. 1—7. "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good *to be left at Athens alone*, and sent Timotheus, our brother and minister of God, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith;—but now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith."

The history relates, that when Paul came out of Macedonia to Athens, Silas and Timothy staid behind at Berea: "The brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea; but Silas and Timotheus abode there still; and they that conducted Paul brought him to Athens." Acts, ch. xvii. 14, 15. The history farther relates, that after Paul had tarried some time at Athens, and had proceeded from thence to Corinth, whilst he was exercising his ministry in that city, Silas and Timothy came to him from Macedonia. Acts, ch. xviii. 5. But to reconcile the



history with the clause in the epistle, which makes St. Paul say, "I thought it good to be left at Athens alone, and to send Timothy unto you," it is necessary to suppose that Timothy had come up with St. Paul at Athens: a circumstance which the history does not mention. I remark therefore, that, although the history does not expressly notice this arrival, yet it contains intimations which render it extremely probable that the fact took place. First, as soon as Paul had reached Athens, he sent a message back to Silas and Timothy, "for to come to him with all speed." Acts, ch. xvii. 15. Secondly, his stay at Athens was on purpose that they might join him there: "Now whilst Paul *waited for them at Athens*, his spirit was stirred in him." Acts, ch. xvii. 16. Thirdly, his departure from Athens does not appear to have been in any sort hastened or abrupt. It is said, "after these things," viz. his disputation with the Jews, his conferences with the philosophers, his discourse at Areopagus, and the gaining of some converts, "he departed from Athens and came to Corinth." It is not hinted that he quitted Athens before the time that he had intended to leave it; it is not suggested that he was driven from thence, as he was from many cities, by tumults or persecutions, or because his life was no longer safe. Observe then the particulars which the history *does* notice—that Paul had ordered Timothy to follow him without delay, that he waited at Athens on purpose that Timothy might come up with him, that he staid there as long as his own choice led him to continue. Laying these circumstances which the history does disclose together, it is highly probable that Timothy came to the apostle at Athens: a fact which the epistle, we have seen, virtually asserts when it makes Paul send Timothy back from Athens to Thessalonica. The *sending back of Timothy into Macedonia* accounts also for his not coming to Corinth till after Paul had been fixed in that city for some considerable time. Paul had found out Aquila and Priscilla, abode with them and wrought, being of the same craft; and reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath day, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. Acts, ch. xviii. 1—5. All this passed at Corinth before Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia. Acts, ch. xviii. 5. If this was the first time of their coming up with him after their separation at Berea, there is nothing to account for a delay so contrary to what appears from the history itself to have been St. Paul's plan and expectation. This is a conformity of a peculiar species. The epistle discloses a fact which is not preserved in

the history ; but which makes what is said in the history more significant, probable, and consistent. The history bears marks of an omission ; the epistle by reference furnishes a circumstance which supplies that omission.

#### No. V.

Chap. ii. 14. "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus ; for ye also have suffered like things *of your own countrymen*, even as they have of the Jews."

To a reader of the Acts of the Apostles, it might seem at first sight, that the persecutions which the preachers and converts of Christianity underwent, were suffered at the hands of their old adversaries the Jews. But if we attend carefully to the accounts there delivered, we shall observe, that, though the opposition made to the Gospel usually *originated* from the enmity of the Jews, yet in almost all places the Jews went about to accomplish their purpose, by stirring up the Gentile inhabitants against their converted countrymen. Out of Judea they had not power to do much mischief in any other way. This was the case at Thessalonica in particular : "The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, set all the city in an uproar." Acts, ch. xvii. ver. 5. It was the same a short time afterwards at Berea : "When the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people." Acts, ch. xvii. 13. And before this our apostle had met with a like species of persecution, in his progress through the Lesser Asia : in every city "the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren." Acts, ch. xiv. 2. The epistle therefore represents the case accurately as the history states it. It was the Jews always who set on foot the persecutions against the apostles and their followers. He speaks truly therefore of them, when he says in this epistle, "they both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have *persecuted us*—forbidding us to speak unto the Gentiles." (ii. 15, 16.) But out of Judea it was at the hands of the Gentiles, it was "of their own countrymen," that the injuries they underwent were immediately sustained : "Ye have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews."

## No. VI.

The apparent discrepancies between our epistle and the history, though of magnitude sufficient to repel the imputation of confederacy or transcription, (in which view they form a part of our argument,) are neither numerous, nor very difficult to reconcile.

One of these may be observed in the ninth and tenth verses of the second chapter: "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travel; for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." A person who reads this passage is naturally led by it to suppose, that the writer had dwelt at Thessalonica for some considerable time; yet of St. Paul's ministry in that city, the history gives no other account than the following: that "he came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: that, as his manner was, he went in unto them, and *three sabbath days* reasoned with them out of the Scriptures: that some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas." The history then proceeds to tell us, that the Jews which believed not set the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, where Paul and his companions lodged; that the consequence of this outrage was, that the "brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea." Acts, ch. xvii. 1—10. From the mention of his preaching three sabbath days in the Jewish synagogue, and from the want of any farther specification of his ministry, it has usually been taken for granted that Paul did not continue at Thessalonica more than three weeks. This, however, is inferred without necessity. It appears to have been St. Paul's practice, in almost every place that he came to, upon his first arrival to repair to the synagogue. He thought himself bound to propose the Gospel to the Jews first, agreeably to what he declared at Antioch in Pisidia; "it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you." Acts, ch. xiii. 46. If the Jews rejected his ministry, he quitted the synagogue, and betook himself to a Gentile audience. At Corinth, upon his first coming there, he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath; "but when the Jews opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he departed thence," expressly telling them, "From henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles; and he remained in that city a year and six months." Acts,



ch. xviii. 6—11. At Ephesus, in like manner, for the space of three months he went into the synagogue; but “when divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way, he departed from them and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus; and this continued by the space of two years.” Acts, ch. xix. 9, 10. Upon inspecting the history, I see nothing in it which negatives the supposition, that St. Paul pursued the same plan at Thessalonica which he adopted in other places; and that, though he resorted to the synagogue only three sabbath days, yet he remained in the city, and in the exercise of his ministry among the Gentile citizens, much longer; and until the success of his preaching had provoked the Jews to excite the tumult and insurrection by which he was driven away.

Another seeming discrepancy is found in the ninth verse of the first chapter of the epistle: “For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how *ye turned to God from idols* to serve the living and true God.” This text contains an assertion, that, by means of St. Paul’s ministry at Thessalonica, many idolatrous Gentiles had been brought over to Christianity. Yet the history, in describing the effects of that ministry, only says, that “some of the Jews believed, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.” (Ch. xvii. 4.) The devout Greeks were those who already worshipped the one true God; and therefore could not be said, by embracing Christianity, “to be turned to God from idols.”

This is the difficulty. The answer may be assisted by the following observations: The Alexandrine and Cambridge manuscripts read (for των σεβομενων Ἑλληνων πολυ πληθος) των σεβομενων και Ἑλληνων πολυ πληθος in which reading they are also confirmed by the Vulgate Latin. And this reading is, in my opinion, strongly supported by the considerations, first, that οἱ σεβομενοι alone, *i. e.* without Ἕλληνες, is used in this sense in the same chapter—Paul being come to Athens, διελεγετο εν τη συναγωγη τοις Ιουδαιοις και τοις σεβομενοις; secondly, that σεβομενοι and Ἕλληνες no where come together. The expression is redundant. The οἱ σεβομενοι must be Ἕλληνες. Thirdly, that the και is much more likely to have been left out incuriâ manûs than to have been put in. Or, after all, if we be not allowed to change the present reading, which is undoubtedly retained by a great plurality of copies, may not the passage in the history be considered as describing only the effects of St. Paul’s discourses during the

three sabbath days in which he preached in the synagogue? and may it not be true, as we have remarked above, that his application to the Gentiles at large, and his success amongst them, was posterior to this?

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

#### No. I.

It may seem odd to allege obscurity itself as an argument, or to draw a proof in favour of a writing from that which is naturally considered as the principal defect in its composition. The present epistle, however, furnishes a passage, hitherto unexplained, and probably inexplicable by us, the existence of which, under the darkness and difficulties that attend it, can be accounted for only by the supposition of the epistle being genuine; and upon that supposition is accounted for with great ease. The passage which I allude to is found in the second chapter: "That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that *WHEN I WAS YET WITH YOU I TOLD YOU THESE THINGS? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time; for the mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he that now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.*" It were superfluous to prove, because it is in vain to deny, that this passage is involved in great obscurity, more especially the clauses distinguished by italics. Now the observation I have to offer is founded upon this, that the passage expressly refers to a conversation which the author had previously holden with the Thessalonians upon the same subject: "Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you *I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth.*" If such conversation actually passed; if, whilst "he was yet with them, he *told* them those things," then it follows that the epistle is authentic. And of the reality of this conversation it appears to be a proof, that what is said in the epistle might be

understood by those who had been present at such conversation, and yet be incapable of being explained by any other. No man writes unintelligibly on purpose. But it may easily happen, that a part of a letter which relates to a subject, upon which the parties had conversed together before, which refers to what had been before *said*, which is in truth a portion or continuation of a former discourse, may be utterly without meaning to a stranger who should pick up the letter upon the road, and yet be perfectly clear to the person to whom it is directed, and with whom the previous communication had passed. And if, in a letter which thus accidentally fell into my hands, I found a passage expressly referring to a former conversation, and difficult to be explained without knowing that conversation, I should consider this very difficulty as a proof that the conversation had actually passed, and consequently that the letter contained the real correspondence of real persons.

## No. II.

Chap. iii. 8. "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought, but wrought with labour night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have no power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow."

In a letter, purporting to have been written to another of the Macedonian churches, we find the following declaration:

"Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, *no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.*"

The conformity between these two passages is strong and plain. They confine the transaction to the same period. The epistle to the Philippians refers to what passed "in the beginning of the Gospel," that is to say, during the first preaching of the Gospel on that side of the Ægean sea. The Epistle to the Thessalonians speaks of the apostle's conduct in that city upon "his first entrance in unto them," which the history informs us was in the course of his first visit to the peninsula of Greece.

As St. Paul tells the Philippians, "that no church communicated with him, as concerning giving and receiving, but they only," he could not, consistently with the truth of this declaration, have received any thing from the neighbouring church of Thessalonica. What thus appears by general implication in an



epistle to another church, when he writes to the Thessalonians themselves, is noticed expressly and particularly; “neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought, but wrought night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you.”

The texts here cited further also exhibit a mark of conformity with what St. Paul is made to say of himself in the Acts of the Apostles. The apostle not only reminds the Thessalonians that he had not been chargeable to any of them, but he states likewise the motive which dictated this reserve: “not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.” (Ch. iii. 9.) This conduct, and what is much more precise, the end which he had in view by it, was the very same as that which the history attributes to St. Paul in a discourse which it represents him to have addressed to the elders of the church of Ephesus: “Yea, ye yourselves also know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have *showed* you all things, how *that so labouring ye ought to support the weak.*” Acts, ch. xx. 34. The sentiment in the epistle and in the speech is in both parts of it so much alike, and yet the words which convey it show so little of imitation or even of resemblance, that the agreement cannot well be explained without supposing the speech and the letter to have really proceeded from the same person.

### No. III.

Our reader remembers the passage in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, in which St. Paul spoke of the coming of Christ: “This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep: for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, and so shall we be ever with the Lord.—But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” 1 Thess. iv. 15—17, and ch. v. 4. It should seem that the Thessalonians, or some however amongst them, had from this passage conceived an opinion (and that not very unnaturally) that the coming of Christ was to take place instantly, ὅτι ἐνεστήκεν<sup>a</sup>; and that this persuasion had produced,

<sup>a</sup> Ὅτι ἐνεστήκεν, nempe hoc anno, says Grotius; ἐνεστήκεν hic dicitur de re præ-senti, ut Rom. viii. 38. 1 Cor. iii. 22. Gal. i. 4. Heb. ix. 9.

as it well might, much agitation in the church. The apostle therefore now writes, amongst other purposes, to quiet this alarm, and to rectify the misconstruction that had been put upon his words:—"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, *nor by letter as from us*, as that the day of Christ is at hand." If the allusion which we contend for be admitted, namely, if it be admitted, that the passage in the second epistle relates to the passage in the first, it amounts to a considerable proof of the genuineness of both epistles. I have no conception, because I know no example, of such a device in a forgery, as first to frame an ambiguous passage in a letter, then to represent the persons to whom the letter is addressed as mistaking the meaning of the passage, and lastly, to write a second letter in order to correct this mistake.

I have said that this argument arises out of the text, *if* the allusion be admitted; for I am not ignorant that many expositors understand the passage in the second epistle as referring to some forged letters, which had been produced in St. Paul's name, and in which the apostle had been made to say that the coming of Christ was then at hand. In defence, however, of the explanation which we propose, the reader is desired to observe,

1. The strong fact, that there exists a passage in the first epistle, to which that in the second is capable of being referred, *i. e.* which accounts for the error the writer is solicitous to remove. Had no other epistle than the second been extant, and had it under these circumstances come to be considered, whether the text before us related to a forged epistle or to some misconstruction of a true one, many conjectures and many probabilities might have been admitted in the inquiry, which can have little weight when an epistle is produced, containing the very sort of passage we were seeking, that is, a passage liable to the misinterpretation which the apostle protests against.

2. That the clause which introduces the passage in the second epistle bears a particular affinity to what is found in the passage cited from the first epistle. The clause is this: "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by our gathering together unto him*." Now in the first epistle the description of the coming of Christ is accompanied with the mention of this very circumstance of his saints being collected round him. "The Lord himself shall descend from

heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, *to meet the Lord* in the air." 1 Thess. chap. iv. 16, 17. This I suppose to be the "gathering together unto him" intended in the second epistle; and that the author, when he used these words, retained in his thoughts what he had written on the subject before.

3. The second epistle is written in the joint name of Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus, and it cautions the Thessalonians against being misled "by letter as from us" (*ὡς δι' ἡμῶν*). Do not these words, *δι' ἡμῶν*, appropriate the reference to some writing which bore the name of these three teachers? Now this circumstance, which is a very close one, belongs to the epistle at present in our hands; for the epistle which we call the First Epistle to the Thessalonians contains these names in its superscription.

4. The words in the original, as far as they are material to be stated, are these: *εἰς τὸ μὴ ταχέως σαλευθῆναι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ νοοῦ, μὴτε θροεῖσθαι, μὴτε διὰ πνεύματος, μὴτε διὰ λόγου, μὴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς, ὡς δι' ἡμῶν, ὡς ὅτι ἐνεστῆκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ Χριστοῦ*. Under the weight of the preceding observations, may not the words *μὴτε διὰ λόγου, μὴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς, ὡς δι' ἡμῶν*, be construed to signify *quasi nos quid tale aut dixerimus aut scripserimus*<sup>a</sup>, intimating that their words had been mistaken, and that they had in truth said or written no such thing?

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

FROM the third verse of the first chapter, "as I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia," it is

<sup>a</sup> Should a contrary interpretation be preferred, I do not think that it implies the conclusion that a false epistle had then been published in the apostle's name. It will completely satisfy the allusion in the text to allow, that some one or other at Thessalonica had pretended to have been told by St. Paul and his companions, or to have seen a letter from them, in which they had said, that the day of Christ was at hand. In like manner as, Acts xv. 1. 24, it is recorded that some had pretended to have received instructions from the church at Jerusalem, which had been received, "to whom they gave no such commandment." And thus Dr. Benson interpreted the passage *μὴτε θροεῖσθαι, μὴτε διὰ πνεύματος, μὴτε διὰ λόγου, μὴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς, ὡς δι' ἡμῶν*, "nor be dismayed by any revelation, or discourse, or epistle, which any one shall pretend to have heard or received from us."



evident that this epistle was written soon after St. Paul had gone to Macedonia from Ephesus. Dr. Benson fixes its date to the time of St. Paul's journey recorded in the beginning of the twentieth chapter of the Acts: "And after the uproar (excited by Demetrius at Ephesus) was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia." And in this opinion Dr. Benson is followed by Michaelis, as he was preceded by the greater part of the commentators who have considered the question. There is however one objection to the hypothesis, which these learned men appear to me to have overlooked; and it is no other than this, that the superscription of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians seems to prove, that at the time St. Paul is supposed by them to have written this epistle to Timothy, Timothy in truth was with St. Paul in Macedonia. Paul, as it is related in the Acts, left Ephesus "for to go into Macedonia." When he had got into Macedonia he wrote his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Concerning this point there exists little variety of opinion. It is plainly indicated by the contents of the epistle. It is also strongly implied that the epistle was written *soon* after the apostle's arrival in Macedonia; for he begins his letter by a train of reflection, referring to his persecutions in Asia as to recent transactions, as to dangers from which he had lately been delivered. But in the salutation with which the epistle opens, *Timothy was joined with St. Paul*, and consequently could not at that time be "left behind at Ephesus." And as to the only solution of the difficulty which can be thought of, viz. that Timothy, though he was left behind at Ephesus upon St. Paul's departure from Asia, yet might follow him so soon after as to come up with the apostle in Macedonia, before he wrote his epistle to the Corinthians; that supposition is inconsistent with the terms and tenor of the epistle throughout: for the writer speaks uniformly of his intention to return to Timothy at Ephesus, and not of his expecting Timothy to come to him in Macedonia: "These things write I unto thee *hoping to come unto thee shortly*; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself." Ch. iii. 14, 15. "*Till I come*, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." Ch. iv. 13.

Since, therefore, the leaving of Timothy behind at Ephesus, when Paul went into Macedonia, suits not with any journey into Macedonia recorded in the Acts, I concur with Bishop Pearson in placing the date of this epistle, and the journey re-

ferred to in it, at a period subsequent to St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, and consequently subsequent to the æra up to which the Acts of the Apostles brings his history. The only difficulty which attends our opinion is, that St. Paul must according to us, have come to Ephesus after his liberation at Rome, contrary, as it should seem, to what he foretold to the Ephesian elders, "that they should see his face no more." And it is to save the infallibility of this prediction, and for no other reason of weight, that an earlier date is assigned to this epistle. The prediction itself, however, when considered in connexion with the circumstances under which it was delivered, does not seem to demand so much anxiety. The words in question are found in the twenty-fifth verse of the twentieth chapter of the Acts: "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." In the twenty-second and twenty-third verses of the same chapter, *i. e.* two verses before, the apostle makes this declaration: "And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." This "witnessing of the Holy Ghost" was undoubtedly prophetic and supernatural. But it went no farther than to foretell that bonds and afflictions awaited him. And I can very well conceive, that this might be all which was communicated to the apostle by extraordinary revelation, and that the rest was the conclusion of his own mind, the desponding inference which he drew from strong and repeated intimations of approaching danger. And the expression "I know," which St. Paul here uses, does not perhaps, when applied to future events affecting himself, convey an assertion so positive and absolute as we may at first sight apprehend. In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians and the twenty-fifth verse, "I know," says he, "that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith." Notwithstanding this strong declaration, in the second chapter and the twenty-third verse of this same epistle, and speaking also of the very same event, he is content to use a language of some doubt and uncertainty: "Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as *I shall see how it will go with me.* But *I trust* in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." And a few verses preceding these, he not only seems

to doubt of his safety, but almost to despair; to contemplate the possibility at least of his condemnation and martyrdom: "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all."

### No. I.

But can we show that St. Paul visited Ephesus after his liberation at Rome? or rather, can we collect any hints from his other letters which make it probable that he did? If we can, then we have a *coincidence*; if we cannot, we have only an unauthorized supposition, to which the exigency of the case compels us to resort. Now, for this purpose, let us examine the Epistle to the Philippians and the Epistle to Philemon. These two epistles purport to be written whilst St. Paul was yet a prisoner at Rome. To the Philippians he writes as follows: "I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." To Philemon, who was a Colossian, he gives this direction: "But withal, prepare me also a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." An inspection of the map will show us that Colosse was a city of the Lesser Asia, lying eastward, and at no great distance from Ephesus. Philippi was on the other, *i. e.* the western, side of the Ægean sea. If the apostle executed his purpose; if, in pursuance of the intention expressed in his letter to Philemon, he came to Colosse soon after he was set at liberty at Rome, it is very improbable that he would omit to visit Ephesus, which lay so near to it, and where he had spent three years of his ministry. As he was also under a promise to the church of Philippi to see them "shortly;" if he passed from Colosse to Philippi, or from Philippi to Colosse, he could hardly avoid taking Ephesus in his way.

### No. II.

Chap. v. 9. "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old."

This accords with the account delivered in the sixth chapter of the Acts. "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, *because their widows were*



*neglected in the daily ministration.*" It appears that, from the first formation of the Christian church, provision was made out of the public funds of the society for the indigent *widows* who belonged to it. The history, we have seen, distinctly records the existence of such an institution at Jerusalem, a few years after our Lord's ascension; and is led to the mention of it very incidentally, viz. by a dispute, of which it was the occasion, and which produced important consequences to the Christian community. The epistle, without being suspected of borrowing from the history, refers, briefly indeed, but decisively, to a similar establishment, subsisting some years afterwards at Ephesus. This agreement indicates that both writings were founded upon real circumstances.

But, in this article, the material thing to be noticed is the mode of expression: "Let not a widow be taken into the number."—No previous account or explanation is given, to which these words, "into the number," can refer; but the direction comes concisely and unpreparedly. "Let not a widow be taken into the number." Now this is the way in which a man writes, who is conscious that he is writing to persons already acquainted with the subject of his letter; and who, he knows, will readily apprehend and apply what he says by virtue of their being so acquainted: but it is not the way in which a man writes upon any other occasion; and least of all, in which a man would draw up a feigned letter, or introduce a supposititious fact."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> It is not altogether unconnected with our general purpose to remark, in the passage before us, the selection and reserve which St. Paul recommends to the governors of the church of Ephesus in the bestowing relief upon the poor, because it refutes a calumny which has been insinuated, that the liberality of the first Christians was an artifice to catch converts; or one of the temptations, however, by which the idle and mendicant were drawn into this society: "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows refuse." (v. 9, 10, 11.) And, in another place, "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed." And to the same effect, or rather more to our present purpose, the apostle writes in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians: "Even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat," *i. e.* at the public expense. "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, *working not at all*, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." Could a designing or dissolute poor take advantage of bounty regulated with so much caution; or could the mind which dictated those sober and prudent directions be influenced in his recommendations of public charity by any other than the properest motives of beneficence?

## No. III.

Chap. iii. 2, 3. "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, no greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house."

"*No striker*:" That is the article which I single out from the collection as evincing the antiquity at least, if not the genuineness, of the epistle; because it is an article which no man would have made the subject of caution who lived in an advanced æra of the church. It agreed with the infancy of the society, and with no other state of it. After the government of the church had acquired the dignified form which it soon and naturally assumed, this injunction could have no place. Would a person who lived under a hierarchy, such as the Christian hierarchy became when it had settled into a regular establishment, have thought it necessary to prescribe concerning the qualification of a bishop, "that he should be no striker?" And this injunction would be equally alien from the imagination of the writer, whether he wrote in his own character, or personated that of an apostle.

## No. IV.

Chap. v. 23. "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

Imagine an impostor sitting down to forge an epistle in the name of St. Paul. Is it credible that it should come into his head to give such a direction as this; so remote from every thing of doctrine or discipline, every thing of public concern to the religion or the church, or to any sect, order, or party in it, and from every purpose with which such an epistle could be written? It seems to me that nothing but reality, that is, the real valetudinary situation of a real person, could have suggested a thought of so domestic a nature.

But if the peculiarity of the advice be observable, the place in which it stands is more so. The context is this: "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. Some

men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgement; and some men they follow after." The direction to Timothy about his diet stands between two sentences, as wide from the subject as possible. The train of thought seems to be broken to let it in. Now when does this happen? It happens when a man writes as he remembers; when he puts down an article that occurs the moment it occurs, lest he should afterwards forget it. Of this the passage before us bears strongly the appearance. In actual letters, in the negligence of real correspondence, examples of this kind frequently take place; seldom, I believe, in any other production. For the moment a man regards what he writes as a *composition*, which the author of a forgery would, of all others, be the first to do, notions of order, in the arrangement and succession of his thoughts, present themselves to his judgement, and guide his pen.

## No. V.

Chap. i. 15, 16. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting."

What was the mercy which St. Paul here commemorates, and what was the crime of which he accuses himself, is apparent from the verses immediately preceding: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; *who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious*; but I obtained *mercy*, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (ch. i. 12, 13). The whole quotation plainly refers to St. Paul's original enmity to the Christian name, the interposition of Providence in his conversion, and his subsequent designation to the ministry of the Gospel; and by this reference affirms indeed the substance of the apostle's history delivered in the Acts. But what in the passage strikes my mind most powerfully, is the observation that is raised out of the fact. "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." It is a just and solemn reflection, springing from the circumstances of the author's conversion, or rather



from the impression which that great event had left upon his memory. It will be said, perhaps, that an impostor acquainted with St. Paul's history may have put such a sentiment into his mouth; or, what is the same thing, into a letter drawn up in his name. But where, we may ask, is such an impostor to be found? The piety, the truth, the benevolence of the thought, ought to protect it from this imputation. For, though we should allow that one of the great masters of the ancient tragedy could have given to his scene a sentiment as virtuous and as elevated as this is, and at the same time as appropriate, and as well suited to the particular situation of the person who delivers it; yet whoever is conversant in these inquiries will acknowledge, that to do this in a fictitious production is beyond the reach of the understandings which have been employed upon any *fabrications* that have come down to us under Christian names.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

#### No. I.

It was the uniform tradition of the primitive church, that St. Paul visited Rome twice, and twice there suffered imprisonment; and that he was put to death at Rome at the conclusion of his second imprisonment. This opinion concerning St. Paul's *two* journeys to Rome is confirmed by a great variety of hints and allusions in the epistle before us, compared with what fell from the apostle's pen in other letters purporting to have been written from Rome. That our present epistle was written whilst St. Paul was a *prisoner*, is distinctly intimated by the eighth verse of the first chapter: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner." And whilst he was a prisoner *at Rome*, by the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of the same chapter: "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but when he was in Rome he sought me out very diligently and found me." Since it appears from the former quotation that St. Paul wrote this epistle in confinement, it will hardly admit of doubt that the word *chain*, in the latter quotation, refers to that confinement; the chain by which he

was *then* bound, the custody in which he was then kept. And if the word "chain" designate the author's confinement at the time of writing the epistle, the next words determine it to have been written from Rome: "He was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome he sought me out very diligently." Now that it was not written during the apostle's first imprisonment at Rome, or during the same imprisonment in which the epistles to the Ephesians, the Colossians, the Philippians, and Philemon, were written, may be gathered, with considerable evidence, from a comparison of these several epistles with the present.

I. In the former epistles the author confidently looked forward to his liberation from confinement, and his speedy departure from Rome. He tells the Philippians, (ch. ii. 24,) "I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." Philemon he bids to prepare for him a lodging; "for I trust," says he, "that through your prayers I shall be given unto you" (ver. 22). In the epistle before us he holds a language extremely different: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day" (ch. iv. 6—8).

II. When the former epistles were written from Rome, Timothy was with St. Paul; and is joined with him in writing to the Colossians, the Philippians, and to Philemon. The present epistle implies that he was absent.

III. In the former epistles Demas was with St. Paul at Rome: "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you." In the epistle now before us: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is gone to Thessalonica."

IV. In the former epistles, Mark was with St. Paul, and joins in saluting the Colossians. In the present epistle, Timothy is ordered to bring him with him, "for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (ch. iv. 11).

The case of Timothy and of Mark might be very well accounted for, by supposing the present epistle to have been written *before* the others; so that Timothy, who is here exhorted "to come shortly unto him," (ch. iv. 9.) might have arrived, and that Mark, "whom he was to bring with him," (ch. iv. 11,) might have also reached Rome in sufficient time to have been with St. Paul when the four epistles were written; but

then such a supposition is inconsistent with what is said of Demas, by which the posteriority of this to the other epistles is strongly indicated: for in the other epistles Demas was with St. Paul, in the present he hath "forsaken him, and is gone to Thessalonica." The opposition also of sentiment, with respect to the event of the persecution, is hardly reconcileable to the same imprisonment.

The two following considerations, which were first suggested upon this question by Ludovicus Capellus, are still more conclusive.

1. In the twentieth verse of the fourth chapter, St. Paul informs Timothy, "that Erastus abode at Corinth," *Εραστός ἐμείνεν ἐν Κορίνθῳ*. The form of expression implies, that Erastus had staid behind at Corinth, when St. Paul left it. But this could not be meant of any journey from Corinth which St. Paul took prior to his first imprisonment at Rome; for when Paul departed from Corinth, as related in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, Timothy was with him: and this was the last time the apostle left Corinth before his coming to Rome, because he left it to proceed on his way to Jerusalem; soon after his arrival at which place he was taken into custody, and continued in that custody till he was carried to Cæsar's tribunal. There could be no need therefore to inform Timothy that "Erastus staid behind at Corinth" upon this occasion, because if the fact was so, it must have been known to Timothy, who was present, as well as to St. Paul.

2. In the same verse our epistle also states the following article: "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." When St. Paul passed through Miletum on his way to Jerusalem, as related Acts **xx.**, Trophimus was not left behind, but accompanied him to that city. He was indeed the occasion of the uproar at Jerusalem in consequence of which St. Paul was apprehended; for "they had seen," says the historian, "before with him in the city, Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple." This was evidently the last time of Paul's being at Miletus before his first imprisonment; for, as hath been said, after his apprehension at Jerusalem, he remained in custody till he was sent to Rome.

In these two articles we have a journey referred to, which must have taken place subsequent to the conclusion of St. Luke's history, and of course after St. Paul's liberation from his first imprisonment. The epistle, therefore, which contains this re-



ference, since it appears from other parts of it to have been written while St. Paul was a prisoner at Rome, proves that he had returned to that city again, and undergone there a second imprisonment.

I do not produce these particulars for the sake of the support which they lend to the testimony of the fathers concerning St. Paul's *second* imprisonment, but to remark their consistency and agreement with one another. They are all resolvable into one supposition: and although the supposition itself be in some sort only negative, viz. that the epistle was not written during St. Paul's first residence at Rome, but in some future imprisonment in that city; yet is the consistency not less worthy of observation: for the epistle touches upon names and circumstances connected with the date and with the history of the first imprisonment, and mentioned in letters written during that imprisonment, and so touches upon them, as to leave what is said of one consistent with what is said of others, and consistent also with what is said of them in different epistles. Had one of these circumstances been so described as to have fixed the date of the epistle to the first imprisonment, it would have involved the rest in contradiction. And when the number and particularity of the articles which have been brought together under this head are considered, and when it is considered also, that the comparisons we have formed amongst them were in all probability neither provided for, nor thought of, by the writer of the epistle, it will be deemed something very like the effect of truth, that no invincible repugnancy is perceived between them.

## No. II.

In the Acts of the Apostles, in the sixteenth chapter, and at the first verse, we are told that Paul "came to Derbe and Lystra, and behold a certain disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek." In the epistle before us, in the first chapter and at the fourth verse, St. Paul writes to Timothy thus: "Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." Here we have a fair unforced example of coincidence. In the history Timothy was the "son

of a Jewess *that* believed:" in the epistle St. Paul applauds "the *faith* which dwelt in his mother Eunice." In the history it is said of the mother, "that she was a Jewess, and believed:" of the father, "that he was a Greek." Now when it is said of the mother *alone* "that she believed," the father being nevertheless mentioned in the same sentence, we are led to suppose of the father that he did not believe, *i. e.* either that he was dead, or that he remained unconverted. Agreeably hereunto, whilst praise is bestowed in the epistle upon one parent, and upon her sincerity in the faith, no notice is taken of the other. The mention of the grandmother is the addition of a circumstance not found in the history; but it is a circumstance which, as well as the names of the parties, might naturally be expected to be known to the apostle, though overlooked by his historian.

### No. III.

Chap. iii. 15. "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation."

This verse discloses a circumstance which agrees exactly with what is intimated in the quotation from the Acts, adduced in the last number. In that quotation it is recorded of Timothy's mother, "that she was a Jewess." This description is virtually, though, I am satisfied, undesignedly, recognized in the epistle, when Timothy is reminded in it, "that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures." "The Holy Scriptures" undoubtedly meant the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The expression bears that sense in every place in which it occurs. Those of the New had not yet acquired the name; not to mention, that in Timothy's childhood, probably, none of them existed. In what manner then could Timothy have known "from a child" the Jewish Scriptures, had he not been born, on one side or on both, of Jewish parentage? Perhaps he was not less likely to be carefully instructed in them, for that his mother alone professed that religion.

### No. IV.

Chap. ii. 22. "Flee also *youthful* lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

“*Flee also youthful lusts.*” The suitableness of this precept to the age of the person to whom it is addressed, is gathered from 1 Tim. chap. iv. 12: “Let no man despise thy youth.” Nor do I deem the less of this coincidence, because the propriety resides in a single epithet; or because this one precept is joined with, and followed by, a train of others, not more applicable to Timothy than to any ordinary convert. It is in these transient and cursory allusions that the argument is best founded. When a writer dwells and rests upon a point in which some coincidence is discerned, it may be doubted whether he himself had not fabricated the conformity, and was endeavouring to display and set it off. But when the reference is contained in a single word, unobserved perhaps by most readers, the writer passing on to other subjects, as unconscious that he had hit upon a correspondency, or unsolicitous whether it were remarked or not, we may be pretty well assured that no fraud was exercised, no imposition intended.

## No. V.

Chap. iii. 10, 11. “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me *at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra*; what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me.”

The Antioch here mentioned was not Antioch the capital of Syria, where Paul and Barnabas resided “a long time;” but Antioch in Pisidia, to which place Paul and Barnabas came in their first apostolic progress, and where Paul delivered a memorable discourse, which is preserved in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts. At this Antioch the history relates, that the “Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, *and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas*, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came into *Iconium*. . . . And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed; but the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace,



and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles and also of the Jews, with their rulers, *to use them despitefully and to stone them*, they were aware of it, and fled unto *Lystra* and *Derbe*, cities of *Lycaonia*, and unto the region that lieth round about, and there they preached the Gospel. . . . And there came thither certain Jews from *Antioch* and *Iconium*, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and came into the city: and the next day he departed with *Barnabas* to *Derbe*: and when they had preached the Gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to *Lystra*, and to *Iconium*, and to *Antioch*." This account comprises the period to which the allusion in the epistle is to be referred. We have so far therefore a conformity between the history and the epistle, that St. Paul is asserted in the history to have suffered persecutions in the three cities, his persecutions at which are appealed to in the epistle; and not only so, but to have suffered these persecutions both in immediate succession, and in the order in which the cities are mentioned in the epistle. The conformity also extends to another circumstance. In the apostolic history *Lystra* and *Derbe* are commonly mentioned together: in the quotation from the epistle *Lystra* is mentioned, and not *Derbe*. And the distinction will appear on this occasion to be accurate; for St. Paul is here enumerating his persecutions: and although he underwent grievous persecutions in each of the three cities through which he passed to *Derbe*, at *Derbe* itself he met with none: "The next day he departed," says the historian, "to *Derbe*; and when they had preached the Gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to *Lystra*." The epistle, therefore, in the names of the cities, in the order in which they are enumerated, and in the place at which the enumeration stops, corresponds exactly with the history.

But a second question remains, namely, how these persecutions were "known" to Timothy, or why the apostle should recall these in particular to his remembrance, rather than many other persecutions with which his ministry had been attended. When some time, probably three years afterwards, (*vide* Pearson's *Annales Paulinas*,) St. Paul made a second journey through the

same country, "in order to go again and visit the brethren in every city where he had preached the word of the Lord," we read, Acts, chap. xvi. 1, that, "when he came to Derbe and Lystra, behold a certain disciple was there named Timotheus." One or other, therefore, of these cities was the place of Timothy's abode. We read moreover that he was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium; so that he must have been well acquainted with these places. Also again, when Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, Timothy was already a disciple: "Behold, a certain disciple was there named Timotheus." He must therefore have been converted *before*. But since it is expressly stated in the epistle, that Timothy was converted by St. Paul himself, that he was "his own son in the faith;" it follows that he must have been converted by him upon his former journey into those parts, which was the very time when the apostle underwent the persecutions referred to in the epistle. Upon the whole, then, persecutions at the several cities named in the epistle are expressly recorded in the Acts: and Timothy's knowledge of this part of St. Paul's history, which knowledge is appealed to in the epistle, is fairly deduced from the place of his abode, and the time of his conversion. It may farther be observed, that it is probable from this account, that St. Paul was in the midst of those persecutions when Timothy became known to him. No wonder then that the apostle, though in a letter written long afterwards, should remind his favourite convert of those scenes of affliction and distress under which they first met.

Although this coincidence, as to the names of the cities, be more specific and direct than many which we have pointed out, yet I apprehend there is no just reason for thinking it to be artificial: for had the writer of the epistle sought a coincidence with the history upon this head, and searched the Acts of the Apostles for the purpose, I conceive he would have sent us at once to Philippi and Thessalonica, where Paul suffered persecution, and where, from what is stated, it may easily be gathered that Timothy accompanied him, rather than have appealed to persecutions as known to Timothy, in the account of which persecutions Timothy's presence is not mentioned; it not being till after one entire chapter, and in the history of a journey three years future to this, that Timothy's name occurs in the Acts of the Apostles for the first time.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE EPISTLE TO TITUS.

## No. I.

A VERY characteristic circumstance in this epistle, is the quotation from Epimenides, chap. i. 12: "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretans are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies."

Κρητες αι ψευσαι, κακα θηρια, γαστρις αργαι.

I call this quotation characteristic, because no writer in the New Testament, except St. Paul, appealed to heathen testimony; and because St. Paul repeatedly did so. In his celebrated speech at Athens, preserved in the seventeenth chapter of the Acts, he tells his audience, that "in God we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."

—του γαρ και γενος εσμεν.

The reader will perceive much similarity of manner in these two passages. The reference in the speech is to a heathen poet; it is the same in the epistle. In the speech the apostle urges his hearers with the authority of a poet of *their own*; in the epistle he avails himself of the same advantage. Yet there is a variation, which shews that the hint of inserting a quotation in the epistle was not, as it may be suspected, borrowed from seeing the like practice attributed to St. Paul in the history; and it is this, that in the epistle the author cited is called a *prophet*, "one of themselves, even a *prophet* of their own." Whatever might be the reason for calling Epimenides a prophet; whether the names of poet and prophet were occasionally convertible; whether Epimenides in particular had obtained that title, as Grotius seems to have proved; or whether the appellation was given to him, in this instance, as having delivered a description of the Cretan character, which the future state of morals among them verified: whatever was the reason, (and any of these reasons will account for the variation, supposing St. Paul to have been the author,) one point is plain, namely, if the epistle had been forged, and the author had inserted a quotation in it merely from having seen an example of the same kind in a speech



ascribed to St. Paul, he would so far have imitated his original, as to have introduced his quotation in the same manner; that is, he would have given to Epimenides the title which he saw there given to Aratus. The other side of the alternative is, that the history took the hint from the epistle. But that the author of the Acts of the Apostles had not the Epistle to Titus before him, at least that he did not use it as one of the documents or materials of his narrative, is rendered nearly certain by the observation that the name of Titus does not once occur in his book.

It is well known, and was remarked by St. Jerome, that the apophthegm in the fifteenth chapter of the Corinthians, "Evil communications corrupt good manners," is an iambic of Menander's:

Φθίρουσιν ἡδὲ χρηστὴ ἠμιλία κακαί.

Here we have another unaffected instance of the same turn and habit of composition. Probably there are some hitherto unnoticed; and more, which the loss of the original authors renders impossible to be now ascertained.

## No. II.

There exists a visible affinity between the Epistle to Titus and the First Epistle to Timothy. Both letters were addressed to persons left by the writer to preside in their respective churches during his absence. Both letters are principally occupied in describing the qualifications to be sought for, in those whom they should appoint to offices in the church; and the ingredients of this description are in both letters nearly the same. Timothy and Titus are likewise cautioned against the same prevailing corruptions, and in particular against the same misdirection of their cares and studies. This affinity obtains, not only in the subject of the letters, which, from the similarity of situation in the persons to whom they were addressed, might be expected to be somewhat alike, but extends, in a great variety of instances, to the phrases and expressions. The writer accosts his two friends with the same salutation, and passes on to the business of his letter by the same transition.

"Unto Timothy, *my own son in the faith*: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. *As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia,*" &c. 1 Tim. chap. i. 2, 3.

"To Titus, *mine own son after the common faith*: Grace,

mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. *For this cause left I thee in Crete.*" Tit. chap. i. 4, 5.

If Timothy was not to "*give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions,*" (1 Tim. chap. i. 4,) Titus also was to "avoid foolish *questions, and genealogies, and contentions,*" (chap. iii. 9,) and was to "rebuke them sharply, *not giving heed to Jewish fables,*" (chap. i. 14.) If Timothy was to be a pattern, (τυπος,) (1 Tim. chap. iv. 12,) so was Titus, (chap. ii. 7.) If Timothy was to "let no man despise his youth," (1 Tim. chap. iv. 12,) Titus also was to "let no man despise him," (chap. ii. 15). This verbal consent is also observable in some very peculiar expressions, which have no relation to the particular character of Timothy or Titus.

The phrase, "it is a faithful saying," (πιστος ὁ λόγος,) made use of to preface some sentence upon which the writer lays a more than ordinary stress, occurs three times in the First Epistle to Timothy, once in the second, and once in the epistle before us, and in no other part of St. Paul's writings; and it is remarkable that these three epistles were probably all written towards the conclusion of his life; and that they are the only epistles which were written after his first imprisonment at Rome.

The same observation belongs to another singularity of expression, and that is in the epithet "*sound,*" (ὕγιαιων,) as applied to words or doctrine. It is thus used, twice in the First Epistle to Timothy, twice in the Second, and three times in the Epistle to Titus, beside two cognate expressions, ὑγιαίνοντας τη πιστει, and λογὸν ὑγιη; and it is found, in the same sense, in no other part of the New Testament.

The phrase, "God our Saviour," stands in nearly the same predicament. It is repeated three times in the First Epistle to Timothy, as many in the Epistle to Titus, and in no other book of the New Testament occurs at all, except once in the Epistle of Jude.

Similar terms, intermixed indeed with others, are employed in the two epistles, in enumerating the qualifications required in those who should be advanced to stations of authority in the church.

"A bishop must be blameless, *the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own*

house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.”<sup>a</sup>  
1 Tim. chap. iii. 2—4.

“If any be *blameless, the husband of one wife*, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, *not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality*, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.”<sup>b</sup> Titus, chap. i. 6—8.

The most natural account which can be given of these resemblances, is to suppose that the two epistles were written nearly at the same time, and whilst the same ideas and phrases dwelt in the writer’s mind. Let us inquire, therefore, whether the notes of time, extant in the two epistles, in any manner favour this supposition.

We have seen that it was necessary to refer the First Epistle to Timothy to a date subsequent to St. Paul’s first imprisonment at Rome, because there was no journey into Macedonia prior to that event, which accorded with the circumstance of leaving “Timothy behind at Ephesus.” The journey of St. Paul from Crete, alluded to in the epistle before us, and in which Titus “was left in Crete to set in order the things that were wanting,” must, in like manner, be carried to the period which intervened between his first and second imprisonment. For the history, which reaches, we know, to the time of St. Paul’s first imprisonment, contains no account of his going to Crete, except upon his voyage as a prisoner to Rome; and that this could not be the occasion referred to in our epistle is evident from hence, that when St. Paul wrote this epistle, he appears to have been at liberty; whereas after that voyage, he continued for two years at least in confinement. Again, it is agreed that St. Paul wrote his First Epistle to Timothy from Macedonia: “As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went (or came) into Macedonia.” And that he was in these parts, *i. e.* in this peninsula, when he wrote the Epistle to Titus, is rendered probable by his directing Titus to come to him to Nicopolis: “When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be

<sup>a</sup> “Δει ουν τον επισκοπον ανεπιληπτον ειναι, μιας γυναικος ανδρα, νηφαλιον, σωφρονα, κοσμιον, φιλοξενον, διδακτικον, μη παροινον, μη πληκτην, μη αισχροκερδη· αλλ’ επιεικη, αμαχον, αφιλαργυρον· του ιδιου οικου καλως προισταμενον, τεκνα ιχοντα εν υποταγη μετα πασης σεμνοτητος.”

<sup>b</sup> “Ει τις εστιν ανεγκλητος, μιας γυναικος ανηρ, τεκνα ιχων πιστα, μη εν κατηγορια ασωτιας, η ανυποτακτα. Δει γαρ τον επισκοπον ανεγκλητον ειναι, ως Θεου οικονομον, μη αυθαδη, μη οργιλον, μη παροινον, μη πληκτην, μη αισχροκερδη· αλλα φιλοξενον, φιλαγαθον, σωφρονα, δικαιον, δσιον, ιγκρατη.”



diligent (make haste) to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter." The most noted city of that name was in Epirus, near to Actium. And I think the form of speaking, as well as the nature of the case, renders it probable that the writer was at Nicopolis, or in the neighbourhood thereof, when he dictated this direction to Titus.

Upon the whole, if we may be allowed to suppose that St. Paul, after his liberation at Rome, sailed into Asia, taking Crete in his way; that from Asia and from Ephesus, the capital of that country, he proceeded into Macedonia, and crossing the peninsula in his progress, came into the neighbourhood of Nicopolis; we have a route which falls in with every thing. It executes the intention expressed by the apostle of visiting Colosse and Philippi as soon as he should be set at liberty at Rome. It allows him to leave "Titus at Crete," and "Timothy at Ephesus, as he went into Macedonia:" and to write to both not long after from the peninsula of Greece, and probably the neighbourhood of Nicopolis: thus bringing together the dates of these two letters, and thereby accounting for that affinity between them, both in subject and language, which our remarks have pointed out. I confess that the journey which we have thus traced out for St. Paul is, in a great measure, hypothetic: but it should be observed, that it is a species of consistency, which seldom belongs to falsehood, to admit of an hypothesis, which includes a great number of independent circumstances without contradiction.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.

#### No. I.

THE singular correspondency between this epistle and that to the Colossians has been remarked already. An assertion in the Epistle to the Colossians, viz. that "Onesimus was one of them," is verified, not by any mention of Colosse, any the most distant intimation concerning the place of Philemon's abode, but singly by stating Onesimus to be Philemon's servant, and by joining in the salutation Philemon with Archippus; for this Archippus, when we go back to the Epistle to the Colossians, appears to have been an inhabitant of that city, and, as it should seem, to have held an office of authority in that church. The

case stands thus. Take the Epistle to the Colossians alone, and no circumstance is discoverable which makes out the assertion, that Onesimus was "one of them." Take the Epistle to Philemon alone, and nothing at all appears concerning the place to which Philemon or his servant Onesimus belonged. For any thing that is said in the epistle, Philemon might have been a Thessalonian, a Philippian, or an Ephesian, as well as a Colossian. Put the two epistles together, and the matter is clear. The reader perceives a *junction* of circumstances, which ascertains the conclusion at once. Now, all that is necessary to be added in this place is, that this correspondency evinces the genuineness of one epistle, as well as of the other. It is like comparing the two parts of a cloven tally. Coincidence proves the authenticity of both.

## No. II.

And this coincidence is perfect ; not only in the main article of showing, by implication, Onesimus to be a Colossian, but in many dependent circumstances.

1. "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I *have sent again*." (ver. 10—12.) It appears from the Epistle to the Colossians, that, in truth, Onesimus was sent at that time to Colosse : "All my state shall Tychicus declare, whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, *with Onesimus*, a faithful and beloved brother." Colos. chap. iv. 7—9.

2. "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, *whom I have begotten in my bonds*." (ver. 10.) It appears from the preceding quotation, that Onesimus was with St. Paul when he wrote the Epistle to the Colossians : and that he wrote that epistle *in imprisonment* is evident from his declaration in the fourth chapter and third verse : "Praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also *in bonds*."

3. St. Paul bids Philemon prepare for him a lodging : "For I trust," says he, "that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." This agrees with the expectation of speedy deliverance, which he expressed in another epistle written during the same imprisonment : "Him" (Timothy) "I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me ; *but I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly*." Phil. chap. ii. 23, 24.

4. As the letter to Philemon, and that to the Colossians, were written at the same time, and sent by the same messenger, the one to a particular inhabitant, the other to the church of Colosse, it may be expected that the same or nearly the same persons would be about Saint Paul, and join with him, as was the practice, in the salutations of the epistle. Accordingly we find the names of Aristarchus, Marcus, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas, in both epistles. Timothy, who is joined with Saint Paul in the superscription of the Epistle to the Colossians, is joined with him in this. Tychicus did not salute Philemon, because he accompanied the epistle to Colosse, and would undoubtedly there see him. Yet the reader of the Epistle to Philemon will remark one considerable diversity in the catalogue of saluting friends, and which shows that the catalogue was not copied from that to the Colossians. In the Epistle to the Colossians, Aristarchus is called by Saint Paul his fellow-prisoner, Colos. chap. iv. 10; in the Epistle to Philemon, Aristarchus is mentioned without any addition, and the title of fellow-prisoner is given to Epaphras<sup>a</sup>.

And let it also be observed, that, notwithstanding the close and circumstantial agreement between the two epistles, this is not the case of an opening left in a genuine writing, which an impostor is induced to fill up; nor of a reference to some writing not extant, which sets a sophist at work to supply the loss, in like manner as, because Saint Paul was supposed (Colos. chap. iv. 16) to allude to an epistle written by him to the Laodiceans, some person has from thence taken the hint of uttering a forgery under that title. The present, I say, is not that case; for Philemon's name is not mentioned in the Epistle to the Colossians; Onesimus' servile condition is no where hinted at, any more than his crime, his flight, or the place or time of his conversion. The story therefore of the epistle, if it be a fiction, is a fiction to which the author could not have been guided, by any thing he had read in Saint Paul's genuine writings.

### No. III.

Ver. 4, 5. "I thank my God, making mention of thee always

<sup>a</sup> Dr. Benson observes, and perhaps truly, that the appellation of fellow-prisoner, as applied by Saint Paul to Epaphras, did not imply that they were imprisoned together *at the time*; any more than your calling a person your fellow-traveller imports that you are then upon your travels. If he had, upon any former occasion, travelled with you, you might afterwards speak of him under that title. It is just so with the term fellow-prisoner.



in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints."

"*Hearing of thy love and faith.*" This is the form of speech which Saint Paul was wont to use towards those churches which he had not seen, or then visited: see Rom. chap. i. 8; Ephes. chap. i. 15; Col. chap. i. 3, 4. Toward those churches and persons, with whom he was previously acquainted, he employed a different phrase; as, "I thank my God always on your behalf" (1 Cor. chap. i. 4; 2 Thess. chap. i. 3); or, "upon every remembrance of you" (Phil. chap. i. 3; 1 Thess. chap. i. 2, 3; 2 Tim. chap. i. 3); and never speaks of *hearing of them*. Yet, I think it must be concluded, from the nineteenth verse of this epistle, that Philemon had been converted by Saint Paul himself: "Albeit, I do not say to thee how *thou owest unto me* even thine own self besides." Here then is a peculiarity. Let us inquire whether the epistle supplies any circumstance which will account for it. We have seen that it may be made out, not from the epistle itself, but from a comparison of the epistle with that to the Colossians, that Philemon was an inhabitant of Colosse: and it farther appears from the Epistle to the Colossians, that Saint Paul had never been in that city; I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." Col. ch. ii. 1. Although, therefore, Saint Paul had formerly met with Philemon at some other place, and had been the immediate instrument of his conversion, yet Philemon's faith and conduct afterwards, inasmuch as he lived in a city which Saint Paul had never visited, could only be known to him by fame and reputation.

#### No. IV.

The tenderness and delicacy of this epistle have long been admired: "Though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ; I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds." There is something certainly very melting and persuasive in this and every part of the epistle. Yet, in my opinion, the character of Saint Paul prevails in it throughout. The warm, affectionate, authoritative teacher is interceding with an absent friend for a beloved convert. He urges his suit with an earnestness, befitting perhaps not so much

the occasion, as the ardour and sensibility of his own mind. Here also, as every where, he shows himself conscious of the weight and dignity of his mission; nor does he suffer Philemon for a moment to forget it: “*I might* be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient.” He is careful also to recall, though obliquely, to Philemon’s memory, the sacred obligation under which he had laid him, by bringing to him the knowledge of Jesus Christ: “I do not say to thee how thou owest to me even thine own self besides.” Without laying aside, therefore, the apostolic character, our author softens the imperative style of his address, by mixing with it every sentiment and consideration that could move the heart of his correspondent. Aged and in prison, he is content to supplicate and entreat. Onesimus was rendered dear to him by his conversion and his services: the child of his affliction, and “ministering unto him in the bonds of the Gospel.” This ought to recommend him, whatever had been his fault, to Philemon’s forgiveness: “Receive him as myself, as my own bowels.” Every thing, however, should be voluntary. Saint Paul was determined that Philemon’s compliance should flow from his own bounty: “Without thy mind would I do nothing, that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly;” trusting nevertheless to his gratitude and attachment for the performance of all that he requested, and for more: “Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.”

Saint Paul’s discourse at Miletus; his speech before Agrippa; his Epistle to the Romans, as hath been remarked (No. VIII.); that to the Galatians, chap. iv. 11—20; to the Philippians, ch. i. 29; ch. ii. 2; the Second to the Corinthians, chap. vi. 1—13; and indeed some part or other of almost every epistle, exhibit examples of a similar application to the feelings and affections of the persons whom he addresses. And it is observable, that these pathetic effusions, drawn for the most part from his own sufferings and situation, usually precede a command, soften a rebuke, or mitigate the harshness of some disagreeable truth.

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## CHAPTER XV.

## THE SUBSCRIPTIONS OF THE EPISTLES.

SIX of these *subscriptions* are false or improbable; that is, they are either absolutely contradicted by the contents of the epistle, or are difficult to be reconciled with them.

I. The subscription of the First Epistle to the Corinthians states that it was written from Philippi, notwithstanding that, in the sixteenth chapter and the eighth verse of the epistle, St. Paul informs the Corinthians that he will “tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost;” and notwithstanding that he begins the salutations in the epistle by telling them “the churches of Asia salute you;” a pretty evident indication that he himself was in Asia at this time.

II. The Epistle to the Galatians is by the subscription dated from Rome; yet, in the epistle itself, Saint Paul expresses his surprise “that they were *so soon* removing from him that called them;” whereas his journey to Rome was ten years posterior to the conversion of the Galatians. And what, I think, is more conclusive, the author though speaking of himself in this more than any other epistle, does not once mention his bonds, or call himself a prisoner; which he had not failed to do in every one of the four epistles written from that city, and during that imprisonment.

III. The First Epistle to the Thessalonians was written, the subscription tells us, from Athens; yet the epistle refers expressly to the coming of Timotheus from Thessalonica (ch. iii. 6): and the history informs us, Acts xviii. 5, that Timothy came out of Macedonia to Saint Paul at *Corinth*.

IV. The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians is dated, and without any discoverable reason, from Athens also. If it be truly the *second*; if it refer, as it appears to do, (ch. ii. 2,) to the first, and the first was written from Corinth, the place must be erroneously assigned, for the history does not allow us to suppose that Saint Paul, after he had reached Corinth, went back to Athens.

V. The First Epistle to Timothy the subscription asserts to have been sent from Laodicea; yet, when Saint Paul writes, “I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, *πορευομενος εις Μακεδονιαν* (when I set out for Macedonia,)” the reader is naturally led to



conclude, that he wrote the letter upon his arrival in that country.

VI. The Epistle to Titus is dated from Nicopolis in Macedonia, whilst no city of that name is known to have existed in that province.

The use, and the only use, which I make of these observations, is to show how easily errors and contradictions steal in where the writer is not guided by original knowledge. There are only eleven distinct assignments of date to Saint Paul's Epistles; (for the four written from Rome may be considered as plainly contemporary;) and of these, six seem to be erroneous. I do not attribute any authority to these subscriptions. I believe them to have been conjectures founded sometimes upon loose traditions, but more generally upon a consideration of some particular text, without sufficiently comparing it with other parts of the epistle, with different epistles, or with the history. Suppose then that the subscriptions had come down to us as authentic parts of the epistles, there would have been more contrarieties and difficulties arising out of these final verses, than from all the rest of the volume. Yet, if the epistles had been forged, the whole must have been made up of the same elements as those of which the subscriptions are composed, viz. tradition, conjecture, and inference: and it would have remained to be accounted for, how, whilst so many errors were crowded into the concluding clauses of the letters, so much consistency should be preserved in other parts.

The same reflection arises from observing the oversights and mistakes which learned men have committed, when arguing upon allusions which relate to time and place, or when endeavouring to digest scattered circumstances into a continued story. It is indeed the same case; for these subscriptions must be regarded as ancient scholia, and as nothing more. Of this liability to error I can present the reader with a notable instance; and which I bring forward for no other purpose than that to which I apply the erroneous subscriptions. Ludovicus Capellus, in that part of his *Historica Apostolica Illustrata*, which is entitled *De Ordine* Epist. Paul., writing upon the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, triumphs unmercifully over the want of sagacity in Baronius, who, it seems, makes St. Paul write his Epistle to Titus from Macedonia upon his second visit into that province; whereas it appears from the history, that Titus, instead of being at Crete, where the epistle places him, was at

that time sent by the apostle from Macedonia to Corinth. "Animadvertere est," says Capellus, "magnam hominis illius ἀσλείψιαν, qui vult Titum a Paulo in Cretam abductum, illicque relictum, cum inde Nicopolim navigaret, quem tamen agnoscit a Paulo ex Macedoniâ missum esse Corinthum." This probably will be thought a detection of inconsistency in Baronius. But what is the most remarkable, is, that in the same chapter in which he thus indulges his contempt of Baronius's judgement, Capellus himself falls into an error of the same kind, and more gross and palpable than that which he reproves. For he begins the chapter by stating the Second Epistle to the Corinthians and the First Epistle to Timothy to be nearly contemporary; to have been both written during the apostle's second visit into Macedonia; and that a doubt subsisted concerning the immediate priority of their dates: "Posterior ad eosdem Corinthios Epistola, et prior ad Timotheum certant de prioritate, et sub judice lis est; utraque autem scripta est paulo postquam Paulus Epheso discessisset, adeoque dum Macedoniam peragraret, sed utra tempore præcedat, non liquet." Now, in the first place, it is highly improbable that the two epistles should have been written either nearly together, or during the same journey through Macedonia; for, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, Timothy appears to have been *with* St. Paul; in the epistle addressed to him, to have been left behind at Ephesus, and not only left behind, but directed to continue there, till St. Paul should return to that city. In the second place, it is inconceivable, that a question should be proposed concerning the priority of date of the two epistles; for, when St. Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy, opens his address to him by saying, "as I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia," no reader can doubt but that he here refers to the *last* interview which had passed between them; that he had not seen him since; whereas if the epistle be posterior to that to the Corinthians, yet written upon the same visit into Macedonia, this could not be true; for as Timothy was along with St. Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians, he must, upon this supposition, have passed over to St. Paul in Macedonia after he had been left by him at Ephesus, and must have returned to Ephesus again before the epistle was written. What misled Ludovicus Capellus was simply this,—that he had entirely overlooked Timothy's name in the superscription of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Which oversight appears not only in the

quotation which we have given, but from his telling us, as he does, that Timothy came from Ephesus to St. Paul at *Corinth*; whereas the superscription proves that Timothy was already with St. Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians from Macedonia.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE CONCLUSION.

IN the outset of this inquiry, the reader was directed to consider the Acts of the Apostles and the thirteen epistles of St. Paul as certain ancient manuscripts lately discovered in the closet of some celebrated library. We have adhered to this view of the subject. External evidence of every kind has been removed out of sight; and our endeavours have been employed to collect the indications of truth and authenticity, which appeared to exist in the writings themselves, and to result from a comparison of their different parts. It is not however necessary to continue this supposition longer. The testimony which other remains of contemporary, or the monuments of adjoining, ages afford to the reception, notoriety, and public estimation of a book, form, no doubt, the first proof of its genuineness. And in no books whatever is this proof more complete, than in those at present under our consideration. The inquiries of learned men, and, above all, of the excellent Lardner, who never overstates a point of evidence, and whose fidelity in citing his authorities has in no one instance been impeached, have established, concerning these writings, the following propositions:

I. That in the age immediately posterior to that in which St. Paul lived, his letters were publicly read and acknowledged.

Some of them are quoted or alluded to by almost every Christian writer that followed, by Clement of Rome, by Hermas, by Ignatius, by Polycarp, disciples or contemporaries of the apostles; by Justin Martyr, by the churches of Gaul, by Irenæus, by Athenagoras, by Theophilus, by Clement of Alexandria, by Hermias, by Tertullian, who occupied the succeeding age. Now when we find a book quoted or referred to by an ancient author, we are entitled to conclude, that it was read and received in the age and country in which that author lived. And this conclusion does not, in any degree, rest upon



the judgement or character of the author making such reference. Proceeding by this rule, we have, concerning the First Epistle to the Corinthians in particular, within forty years after the epistle was written, evidence, not only of its being extant at Corinth, but of its being known and read at Rome. Clement, bishop of that city, writing to the church of Corinth, uses these words: "Take into your hands the epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle. What did he at first write unto you in the beginning of the Gospel? Verily he did by the Spirit admonish you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos, because that even then you did form parties."<sup>a</sup> This was written at a time when probably some must have been living at Corinth, who remembered St. Paul's ministry there and the receipt of the epistle. The testimony is still more valuable, as it shows that the epistles were preserved in the churches to which they were sent, and that they were spread and propagated from them to the rest of the Christian community. Agreeably to which natural mode and order of their publication, Tertullian, a century afterwards, for proof of the integrity and genuineness of the apostolic writings, bids "any one, who is willing to exercise his curiosity profitably in the business of their salvation, to visit the apostolical churches, in which their very authentic letters are recited, *ipsæ authenticæ literæ eorum recitantur*." Then he goes on: "Is Achaia near you? You have Corinth. If you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi, you have Thessalonica. If you can go to Asia, you have Ephesus; but if you are near to Italy, you have Rome."<sup>b</sup> I adduce this passage to show, that the distinct churches or Christian societies, to which St. Paul's epistles were sent, subsisted for some ages afterwards; that his several epistles were all along respectively read in those churches; that Christians at large received them from those churches, and appealed to those churches for their originality and authenticity.

Arguing in like manner from citations and allusions, we have, within the space of a hundred and fifty years from the time that the first of St. Paul's epistles was written, proofs of almost all of them being read, in Palestine, Syria, the countries of Asia Minor, in Egypt, in that part of Africa which used the Latin tongue, in Greece, Italy, and Gaul<sup>c</sup>. I do not mean simply to assert, that within the space of a hundred and fifty years St.

<sup>a</sup> See Lardner, vol. xii. p. 22.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, vol. ii. p. 598.

<sup>c</sup> See Lardner's Recapitulation, vol. xii. p. 53.

Paul's epistles were read in those countries, for I believe that they were read and circulated from the beginning; but that proofs of their being so read occur within that period. And when it is considered how few of the primitive Christians wrote, and of what was written how much is lost, we are to account it extraordinary, or rather as a sure proof of the extensiveness of the reputation of these writings, and of the general respect in which they were held, that so many testimonies, and of such antiquity, are still extant. "In the remaining works of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, there are perhaps more and larger quotations of the small volume of the New Testament, than of all the works of Cicero, in the writings of all characters for several ages."<sup>a</sup> We must add, that the epistles of Paul come in for their full share of this observation; and that all the thirteen epistles, except that to Philemon, which is not quoted by Irenæus or Clement, and which probably escaped notice merely by its brevity, are severally cited, and expressly recognized as St. Paul's by each of these Christian writers. The Ebionites, an early though inconsiderable Christian sect, rejected St. Paul and his epistles<sup>b</sup>; that is, they rejected these epistles, not because they were not, but because they were St. Paul's; and because, adhering to the obligation of the Jewish law, they chose to dispute his doctrine and authority. Their suffrage as to the genuineness of the epistles does not contradict that of other Christians. Marcion, an heretical writer in the former part of the second century, is said by Tertullian to have rejected three of the epistles which we now receive, viz. the two Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus. It appears to me not improbable, that Marcion might make some such distinction as this, that no apostolic epistle was to be admitted which was not read or attested by the church to which it was sent; for it is remarkable that, together with these epistles to private persons, he rejected also the catholic epistles. Now the catholic epistles and the epistles to private persons agree in the circumstance of wanting this particular species of attestation. Marcion, it seems, acknowledged the epistle to Philemon, and is upbraided for his inconsistency in doing so by Tertullian<sup>c</sup>, who asks, "why, when he received a letter written to a single person, he should refuse two to Timothy and one to Titus, composed upon the affairs of the church?" This passage so far favours our ac-

<sup>a</sup> See Lardner's *Recapitulation*, vol. xii. p. 53.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, vol. ii. p. 808.

<sup>c</sup> Vol. xiv. p. 455.

count of Marcion's objection, as it shows that the objection was supposed by Tertullian to have been founded in something which belonged to the nature of a private letter.

Nothing of the works of Marcion remains. Probably he was, after all, a rash, arbitrary, licentious critic, (if he deserved indeed the name of critic,) and who offered no reason for his determination. What St. Jerome says of him intimates this, and is besides founded in good sense: speaking of him and Basilides, "If they assigned any reasons," says he, "why they did not reckon these epistles," viz. the First and Second to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus, "to be the apostle's, we would have endeavoured to have answered them, and perhaps might have satisfied the reader: but when they take upon them, by their own authority, to pronounce one epistle to be Paul's and another not, they can only be replied to in the same manner."<sup>a</sup> Let it be remembered, however, that Marcion received ten of these epistles. His authority, therefore, even if his credit had been better than it is, forms a very small exception to the uniformity of the evidence. Of Basilides we know still less than we do of Marcion. The same observation, however, belongs to him, viz. that his objection, as far as appears from this passage of St. Jerome, was confined to the three private epistles. Yet is this the only opinion which can be said to disturb the consent of the first two centuries of the Christian æra: for as to Tatian, who is reported by Jerome alone to have rejected some of St. Paul's epistles, the extravagant or rather delirious notions into which he fell, take away all weight and credit from his judgement.—If, indeed, Jerome's account of this circumstance be correct; for it appears from much older writers than Jerome, that Tatian owned and used many of these epistles<sup>b</sup>.

II. They, who in those ages disputed about so many other points, agreed in acknowledging the Scriptures now before us. Contending sects appealed to them in their controversies, with equal and unreserved submission. When they were urged by one side, however they might be interpreted or misinterpreted by the other, their authority was not questioned. "Reliqui omnes," says Irenæus, speaking of Marcion, "falso scientiæ nomine inflati, scripturas quidem confitentur, interpretationes vero convertunt."<sup>c</sup>

III. When the genuineness of some other writings which were

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. xiv. p. 458.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, vol. i. p. 313.

<sup>c</sup> Iren. advers. Hær. quoted by Lardner, vol. xv. p. 425.



in circulation, and even of a few which are now received into the canon, was contested, these were never called into dispute. Whatever was the objection, or whether in truth there ever was any real objection, to the authenticity of the Second Epistle of Peter, the Second and Third of John, the Epistle of James, or that of Jude, or to the book of the Revelation of St. John; the doubts that appeared to have been entertained concerning them, exceedingly strengthen the force of the testimony as to those writings about which there was no doubt; because it shows, that the matter was a subject, amongst the early Christians, of examination and discussion; and that where there was any room to doubt, they did doubt.

What Eusebius hath left upon the subject is directly to the purpose of this observation. Eusebius, it is well known, divided the ecclesiastical writings which were extant in his time into three classes; the “*ἀναντιρρήτα*, uncontradicted,” as he calls them in one chapter; or, “scriptures universally acknowledged,” as he calls them in another: the “controverted, yet well known and approved by many;” and “the spurious.” What were the shades of difference in the books of the second, or of those in the third class; or what it was precisely that he meant by the term *spurious*, it is not necessary in this place to inquire. It is sufficient for us to find, that the thirteen epistles of Saint Paul are placed by him in the first class, without any sort of hesitation or doubt.

It is farther also to be collected from the chapter in which this distinction is laid down, that the method made use of by Eusebius, and by the Christians of his time, viz. the close of the third century, in judging concerning the sacred authority of any books, was to inquire after and consider the testimony of those who lived near the age of the apostles<sup>a</sup>.

IV. That no ancient writing, which is attested as these epistles are, hath had its authenticity disproved, or is in fact questioned. The controversies which have been moved concerning suspected writings, as the epistles, for instance, of Phalaris, or the eighteen epistles of Cicero, begin by showing that this attestation is wanting. That being proved, the question is thrown back upon internal marks of spuriousness or authenticity; and in these the dispute is occupied. In which disputes it is to be observed, that the contested writings are commonly attacked by arguments drawn from some opposition which they betray to

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. viii. p. 106.

“authentic history,” to “true epistles,” to the “real sentiments or circumstances of the author whom they personate;”<sup>a</sup> which authentic history, which true epistles, which real sentiments themselves, are no other than ancient documents, whose early existence and reception can be proved, in the manner in which the writings before us are traced up to the age of their reputed author, or to ages near to his. A modern who sits down to compose the history of some ancient period, has no stronger evidence to appeal to for the most confident assertion, or the most undisputed fact that he delivers, than writings whose genuineness is proved by the same medium through which we evince the authenticity of ours. Nor, whilst he can have recourse to such authorities as these, does he apprehend any uncertainty in his accounts, from the suspicion of spuriousness or imposture in his materials.

V. It cannot be shown that any forgeries, properly so called<sup>b</sup>, that is, writings published under the name of the person who did not compose them, made their appearance in the first century of the Christian æra, in which century these epistles undoubtedly existed. I shall set down under this proposition the guarded words of Lardner himself: “There are no quotations of any books of them (spurious and apocryphal books) in the apostolical fathers, by whom I mean Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, whose writings reach from the year of our Lord 70 to the year 108. *I say this confidently, because I think it has been proved.*” Lardner, vol. xii. p. 158.

Nor when they did appear were they much used by the primitive Christians. “Irenæus quotes not any of these books. He mentions some of them, but he never quotes them. The same may be said of Tertullian: he has mentioned a book called ‘Acts of Paul and Thecla:’ but it is only to condemn it. Clement of Alexandria and Origen have mentioned and quoted several such books, but never as authority, and sometimes with express marks of dislike. Eusebius quoted no such books in any of his works. He has mentioned them indeed, but how? Not by way of approbation, but to show that they were of little or no value, and that they never were received by the sounder part of Christians.” Now, if with this, which is advanced after the most minute and

<sup>a</sup> See the tracts written in the controversy between Tunstal and Middleton, upon certain suspected epistles ascribed to Cicero.

<sup>b</sup> I believe that there is a great deal of truth in Dr. Lardner’s observation, that comparatively few of those books which we call apocryphal were strictly and originally forgeries. See Lardner, vol. xii. p. 167.

diligent examination, we compare what the same cautious writer had before said of our received Scriptures, "that in the works of three only of the above-mentioned fathers, there are more and larger quotations of the small volume of the New Testament, than of all the works of Cicero in the writers of all characters for several ages;" and if with the marks of obscurity or condemnation, which accompanied the mention of the several apocryphal Christian writings, when they happened to be mentioned at all, we contrast what Dr. Lardner's work completely and in detail makes out concerning the writings which we defend, and what, having so made out, he thought himself authorized in his conclusion to assert, that these books were not only received from the beginning, but received with the greatest respect; have been publicly and solemnly read in the assemblies of Christians throughout the world, in every age from that time to this; early translated into the languages of divers countries and people; commentaries writ to explain and illustrate them; quoted by way of proof in all arguments of a religious nature; recommended to the perusal of unbelievers, as containing the authentic account of the Christian doctrine: when we attend, I say, to this representation, we perceive in it not only full proof of the early notoriety of these books, but a clear and sensible line of discrimination, which separates these from the pretensions of any others.

The epistles of St. Paul stand particularly free of any doubt or confusion that might arise from this source. Until the conclusion of the fourth century, no intimation appears of any attempt whatever being made to counterfeit these writings; and then it appears only of a single and obscure instance. Jerome, who flourished in the year 392, has this expression: "*Legunt quidam et ad Laodicenses; sed ab omnibus exploditur,*" there is also an Epistle to the Laodiceans, but it is rejected by every body<sup>a</sup>. Theodoret, who wrote in the year 423, speaks of this epistle in the same terms<sup>b</sup>. Beside these, I know not whether any ancient writer mentions it. It was certainly unnoticed during the first three centuries of the church; and when it came afterwards to be mentioned, it was mentioned only to show, that, though such a writing did exist, it obtained no credit. It is probable that the forgery to which Jerome alludes, is the epistle which we now have under that title. If so, as hath been already observed, it is nothing more than a collection of sentences from

<sup>a</sup> Lardner, vol. x. p. 103.

<sup>b</sup> Lardner, vol. xi. p. 88.



the genuine epistles ; and was perhaps, at first, rather the exercise of some idle pen, than any serious attempt to impose a forgery upon the public. Of an Epistle to the Corinthians under Saint Paul's name, which was brought into Europe in the present century, antiquity is entirely silent. It was unheard of for sixteen centuries ; and at this day, though it be extant, and was first found in the Armenian language, it is not, by the Christians of that country, received into their Scriptures. I hope, after this, that there is no reader who will think there is any competition of credit, or of external proof, between these and the received epistles ; or rather, who will not acknowledge the evidence of authenticity to be confirmed by the want of success which attended imposture.

When we take into our hands the letters which the suffrage and consent of antiquity hath thus transmitted to us, the first thing that strikes our attention is the air of reality and business as well as of seriousness and conviction, which pervades the whole. Let the sceptic read them. If he be not sensible of these qualities in them, the argument can have no weight with him. If he be ; if he perceive in almost every page the language of a mind actuated by real occasions, and operating upon real circumstances, I would wish it to be observed, that the proof which arises from this perception is not to be deemed occult or imaginary, because it is incapable of being drawn out in words, or of being conveyed to the apprehension of the reader in any other way than by sending him to the books themselves.

And here, in its proper place, comes in the argument which it has been the office of these pages to unfold. Saint Paul's Epistles are connected with the history by their particularity, and by the numerous circumstances which are found in them. When we descend to an examination and comparison of these circumstances, we not only observe the history and the epistles to be independent documents unknown to, or at least unconsulted by, each other, but we find the substance, and oftentimes very minute articles, of the history, recognised in the epistles, by allusions and references, which can neither be imputed to *design*, nor, without a foundation in truth, be accounted for by accident ; by hints and expressions, and single words dropping as it were fortuitously from the pen of the writer, or drawn forth, each by some occasion proper to the place in which it occurs, but widely removed from any view to consistency or agreement.

These, we know, are effects which reality naturally produces, but which, without reality at the bottom, can hardly be conceived to exist.

When, therefore, with a body of external evidence, which is relied upon, and which experience proves may safely be relied upon, in appreciating the credit of ancient writings, we combine characters of genuineness and originality which are not found, and which, in the nature and order of things, cannot be expected to be found, in spurious compositions ; whatever difficulties we may meet with in other topics of the Christian evidence, we can have little in yielding our assent to the following conclusions : That there was such a person as Saint Paul ; that he lived in the age which we ascribe to him ; that he went about preaching the religion of which Jesus Christ was the founder ; and that the letters which we now read were actually written by him upon the subject, and in the course of that his ministry.

And if it be true that we are in possession of the very letters which Saint Paul wrote, let us consider what confirmation they afford to the Christian history. In my opinion they substantiate the whole transaction. The great object of modern research is to come at the epistolary correspondence of the times. Amidst the obscurities, the silence, or the contradictions of history, if a letter can be found, we regard it as the discovery of a landmark ; as that by which we can correct, adjust, or supply the imperfections and uncertainties of other accounts. One cause of the superior credit which is attributed to letters is this, that the facts which they disclose generally come out *incidentally*, and therefore without design to mislead the public by false or exaggerated accounts. This reason may be applied to Saint Paul's epistles with as much justice as to any letters whatever. Nothing could be farther from the intention of the writer than to record any part of his history. That his history was *in fact* made public by these letters, and has by the same means been transmitted to future ages, is a secondary and unthought-of effect. The sincerity, therefore, of the apostle's declarations, cannot reasonably be disputed ; at least we are sure that it was not vitiated by any desire of setting himself off to the public at large. But these letters form a part of the muniments of Christianity, as much to be valued for their contents, as for their originality. A more inestimable treasure the care of antiquity could not have sent down to us. Beside the proof they afford of the general reality of Saint Paul's history, of the knowledge which the au-

thor of the Acts of the Apostles had obtained of that history, and the consequent probability that he was, what he professes himself to have been, a companion of the apostle's ; beside the support they lend to these important inferences, they meet specifically some of the principal objections upon which the adversaries of Christianity have thought proper to rely. In particular they show,

I. That Christianity was not a story set on foot amidst the confusions which attended and immediately preceded the destruction of Jerusalem ; when many extravagant reports were circulated, when men's minds were broken by terror and distress, when amidst the tumults that surrounded them inquiry was impracticable. These letters show incontestably that the religion had fixed and established itself before this state of things took place.

II. Whereas it hath been insinuated, that our Gospels may have been made up of reports and stories, which were current at the time, we may observe that, with respect to the Epistles, this is impossible. A man cannot write the history of his own life from reports ; nor, what is the same thing, be led by reports to refer to passages and transactions in which he states himself to have been immediately present and active. I do not allow that this insinuation is applied to the historical part of the New Testament with any colour of justice or probability ; but I say, that to the Epistles it is not applicable at all.

III. These letters prove that the converts to Christianity were not drawn from the barbarous, the mean, or the ignorant set of men which the representations of infidelity would sometimes make them. We learn from letters the character not only of the writer, but, in some measure, of the persons to whom they are written. To suppose that these letters were addressed to a rude tribe, incapable of thought or reflection, is just as reasonable as to suppose Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding to have been written for the instruction of savages. Whatever may be thought of these letters in other respects, either of diction or argument, they are certainly removed as far as possible from the habits and comprehension of a barbarous people.

IV. St. Paul's history, I mean so much of it as may be collected from his letters, is so *implicated* with that of the other apostles, and with the substance indeed of the Christian history itself, that I apprehend it will be found impossible to admit St.



Paul's story (I do not speak of the miraculous part of it) to be true, and yet to reject the rest as fabulous. For instance, can any one believe that there was such a man as Paul, a preacher of Christianity, in the age which we assign to him, and *not* believe that there was also at the same time such a man as Peter, and James, and other apostles, who had been companions of Christ during his life, and who after his death published and avowed the same things concerning him which Paul taught? Judea, and especially Jerusalem, was the scene of Christ's ministry. The witnesses of his miracles lived there. St. Paul, by his own account, as well as that of his historian, appears to have frequently visited that city; to have carried on a communication with the church there; to have associated with the rulers and elders of that church, who were some of them apostles; to have acted, as occasions offered, in correspondence, and sometimes in conjunction with them. Can it after this, be doubted, but that the religion and the general facts relating to it, which St. Paul appears by his letters to have delivered to the several churches which he established at a distance, were at the same time taught and published at Jerusalem itself, the place where the business was transacted; and taught and published by those who had attended the founder of the institution in his miraculous, or pretendedly miraculous, ministry?

It is observable, for so it appears both in the Epistles and from the Acts of the Apostles, that Jerusalem, and the society of believers in that city, long continued the centre from which the missionaries of the religion issued, with which all other churches maintained a correspondence and connexion, to which they referred their doubts, and to whose relief, in times of public distress, they remitted their charitable assistance. This observation I think material, because it proves that this was not the case of giving our accounts in one country of what is transacted in another, without affording the hearers an opportunity of knowing whether the things related were credited by any, or even published, in the place where they are reported to have passed.

V. Saint Paul's letters furnish evidence (and what better evidence than a man's own letters can be desired?) of the soundness and sobriety of his judgement. His caution in distinguishing between the occasional suggestions of inspiration, and the ordinary exercise of his natural understanding, is without example in the history of human enthusiasm. His morality is every

where calm, pure, and rational; adapted to the condition, the activity, and the business of social life, and of its various relations; free from the over-scrupulousness and austerities of superstition, and from what was more perhaps to be apprehended, the abstractions of quietism, and the soarings and extravagancies of fanaticism. His judgement concerning a hesitating conscience; his opinion of the moral indifferency of many actions, yet of the prudence and even the duty of compliance, where non-compliance would produce evil effects upon the minds of the persons who observed it, is as correct and just as the most liberal and enlightened moralist could form at this day. The accuracy of modern ethics has found nothing to amend in these determinations.

What Lord Lyttelton has remarked of the preference ascribed by Saint Paul to inward rectitude of principle above every other religious accomplishment is very material to our present purpose. "In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xiii. 1—3; Saint Paul has these words: *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* Is this the language of enthusiasm? Did ever enthusiast prefer that universal benevolence which comprehendeth all moral virtues, and which, as appeareth by the following verses, is meant by charity here; did ever enthusiast, I say, prefer that benevolence" (which we may add is attainable by every man) "to faith and to miracles, to those religious opinions which he had embraced, and to those supernatural graces and gifts which he imagined he had acquired; nay, even to the merit of martyrdom? Is it not the genius of enthusiasm to set moral virtues infinitely below the merit of faith; and of all moral virtues to value that least which is most particularly enforced by Saint Paul, a spirit of candour, moderation, and peace? Certainly neither the temper nor the opinions of a man subject to fanatic delusions are to be found in this passage." Lord Lyttelton's *Considerations on the Conversion, &c.*

I see no reason therefore to question the integrity of his understanding. To call him a visionary, because he appealed to

visions ; or an enthusiast, because he pretended to inspiration, is to take the whole question for granted. It is to take for granted that no such visions or inspirations existed ; at least it is to assume, contrary to his own assertions, that he had no other proofs than these to offer of his mission, or of the truth of his relations.

One thing I allow, that his letters every where discover great zeal and earnestness in the cause in which he was engaged ; that is to say, he was convinced of the truth of what he taught ; he was deeply impressed, but not more so than the occasion merited, with a sense of its importance. This produces a corresponding animation and solicitude in the exercise of his ministry. But would not these considerations, supposing them to be well founded, have holden the same place, and produced the same effect, in a mind the strongest and the most sedate ?

VI. These letters are decisive as to the sufferings of the author ; also as to the distressed state of the Christian church, and the dangers which attended the preaching of the Gospel.

“ Whereof I Paul am made a minister ; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body’s sake, which is the church.” Col. ch. i. 24.

“ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” 1 Cor. ch. xv. 19.

“ Why stand we in jeopardy every hour ? I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, after the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not ?” 1 Cor. ch. xv. 30, &c.

“ If children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Rom. ch. viii. 17, 18.

“ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Rom. ch. viii. 35, 36.

“ Rejoicing in hope, *patient in tribulation*, continuing instant in prayer.” Rom. ch. xii. 12.

“ Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the



Lord; yet I give my judgement as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good *for the present distress*; I say, that it is good for a man so to be." 1 Cor. ch. vii. 25, 26.

"For unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." Phil. ch. i. 29, 30.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

"From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Gal. ch. vi. 14—17.

"Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." 1 Thess. ch. i. 6.

"We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure." 2 Thess. ch. i. 4.

We may seem to have accumulated texts unnecessarily; but beside that the point which they are brought to prove is of great importance, there is this also to be remarked in every one of the passages cited, that the allusion is drawn from the writer by the argument or the occasion; that the notice which is taken of his sufferings, and of the suffering condition of Christianity, is perfectly incidental, and is dictated by no design of stating the facts themselves. Indeed they are not stated at all: they may rather be said to be assumed. This is a distinction upon which we have relied a good deal in former parts of this treatise; and, where the writer's information cannot be doubted, it always, in my opinion, adds greatly to the value and credit of the testimony.

If any reader require from the apostle more direct and explicit assertions of the same thing, he will receive full satisfaction in the following quotations.

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own

countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." 2 Cor. ch. xi. 23—28.

Can it be necessary to add more? "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day." 1 Cor. ch. iv. 9—13. I subjoin this passage to the former, because it extends to the other apostles of Christianity much of that which St. Paul declared concerning himself.

In the following quotations, the reference to the author's sufferings is accompanied with a specification of time and place, and with an appeal for the truth of what he declares to the knowledge of the persons whom he addresses: "Even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, *as ye know, at Philippi*, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God with much contention." 1 Thess. ch. ii. 2.

"But *thou hast fully known* my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me *at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra*; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me." 2 Tim. ch. iii. 10, 11.

I apprehend that to this point, as far as the testimony of St. Paul is credited, the evidence from his letters is complete and full. It appears under every form in which it could appear, by occasional allusions and by direct assertions, by general declarations and by specific examples.

VII. St. Paul in these letters asserts, in positive and unequivocal terms, his performance of miracles strictly and properly so called.

"He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles (*ενεργων δυναμεις*) among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Gal. ch. iii. 5.

"For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which

Christ hath not wrought by me<sup>a</sup>, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, (ἐν δυνάμει σημειῶν καὶ τερατῶν,) by the power of the Spirit of God: so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ." Rom. ch. xv. 18, 19.

"Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds," (ἐν σημείοις καὶ τεράσι καὶ δυνάμεσι.)<sup>b</sup> 2 Cor. ch. xii. 12.

These words, signs, wonders, and mighty deeds (σημεία, καὶ τεράτα, καὶ δυνάμεις) are the specific appropriate terms throughout the New Testament, employed when public sensible miracles are intended to be expressed. This will appear by consulting, amongst other places, the texts referred to in the note<sup>c</sup>; and it cannot be known that they are ever employed to express any thing else.

Secondly, these words not only denote miracles as opposed to natural effects, but they denote visible, and what may be called external, miracles, as distinguished,

First, from *inspiration*. If Saint Paul had meant to refer only to secret illuminations of his understanding, or secret influences upon his will or affections, he could not, with truth, have represented them as "signs and wonders wrought by him," of "signs and wonders and mighty deeds wrought amongst them."

Secondly, from *visions*. These would not, by any means, satisfy the force of the terms, "signs, wonders, and mighty deeds;" still less could they be said to be "wrought by him," or, "wrought amongst them:" nor are these terms and expressions any where applied to visions. When our author alludes to the supernatural communications which he had re-

<sup>a</sup> i. e. "I will speak of nothing but what Christ hath wrought by me;" or as Grotius interprets it, "Christ hath wrought so great things by me, that I will not dare to say what he hath not wrought."

<sup>b</sup> To these may be added the following indirect allusions, which, though if they had stood alone, i. e. without plainer texts in the same writings, they might have been accounted dubious; yet, when considered in conjunction with the passages already cited, can hardly receive any other interpretation than that which we give them.

"My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of men's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." 1 Cor. ch. ii. 4—6.

"The Gospel, whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of his power." Ephes. ch. iii. 7.

"For he that wrought effectually in Peter, to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles." Gal. ch. ii. 8.

"For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." 1 Thess. ch. i. 5.

<sup>c</sup> Mark xvi. 20. Luke xxiii. 8. John ii. 11—23; iii. 2; iv. 48—54; xi. 49. Acts ii. 22; iv. 3; v. 12; vi. 8; vii. 16; xiv. 3; xv. 12. Heb. ii. 4.



ceived, either by vision or otherwise, he uses expressions suited to the nature of the subject, but very different from the words which we have quoted. He calls them revelations, but never signs, wonders, or mighty deeds. "I will come," says he, "to visions and *revelations* of the Lord;" and then proceeds to describe a particular instance, and afterwards adds, "lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh."

Upon the whole, the matter admits of no softening qualification, or ambiguity whatever. If Saint Paul did not work actual, sensible, public miracles, he has knowingly, in these letters, borne his testimony to a falsehood. I need not add, that, in two also of the quotations, he has advanced his assertion in the face of those persons amongst whom he declares the miracles to have been wrought.

Let it be remembered that the Acts of the Apostles described various particular miracles wrought by Saint Paul, which in their nature answer to the terms and expressions which we have seen to be used by Saint Paul himself.

Here then we have a man of liberal attainments, and in other points of sound judgement, who had addicted his life to the service of the Gospel. We see him, in the prosecution of his purpose, travelling from country to country, enduring every species of hardship, encountering every extremity of danger, assaulted by the populace, punished by the magistrates, scourged, beat, stoned, left for dead; expecting, wherever he came, a renewal of the same treatment, and the same dangers, yet, when driven from one city, preaching in the next; spending his whole time in the employment, sacrificing to it his pleasures, his ease, his safety; persisting in this course to old age, unaltered by the experience of perverseness, ingratitude, prejudice, desertion; unsubdued by anxiety, want, labour, persecutions; unwearied by long confinement, undismayed by the prospect of death. Such was Saint Paul. We have his letters in our hands; we have also a history purporting to be written by one of his fellow-travellers, and appearing, by a comparison with these letters, certainly to have been written by some person well acquainted with the transactions of his life. From the letters, as well as from the history, we gather not only the account which we have stated of *him*, but that he was one out of many who acted and suffered in the same manner; and that of those who did so, several had been the companions of Christ's ministry, the ocular

witnesses, or pretending to be such, of his miracles, and of his resurrection. We moreover find this same person referring in his letters to his supernatural conversion, the particulars and accompanying circumstances of which are related in the history, and which accompanying circumstances, if all or any of them be true, render it impossible to have been a delusion. We also find him positively, and in appropriate terms, asserting that he himself worked miracles, strictly and properly so called, in support of the mission which he executed; the history, meanwhile, recording various passages of his ministry, which come up to the extent of this assertion. The question is, whether falsehood was ever attested by evidence like this. Falsehoods, we know, have found their way into reports, into tradition, into books; but is an example to be met with, of a man voluntarily undertaking a life of want and pain, of incessant fatigue, of continual peril; submitting to the loss of his home and country, to stripes and stoning, to tedious imprisonment, and the constant expectation of a violent death, for the sake of carrying about a story of what was false, and of what, if false, he must have known to be so?





A DEFENCE  
OF  
THE CONSIDERATIONS  
ON  
THE PROPRIETY OF REQUIRING A SUBSCRIPTION TO  
ARTICLES OF FAITH;

IN REPLY TO A LATE ANSWER FROM THE CLARENDON PRESS.



# A DEFENCE

OF

## THE CONSIDERATIONS,

ETC.

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THE fair way of conducting a dispute is to exhibit one by one the arguments of your opponent, and with each argument the precise and specific answer you are able to give it. If this method be not so common, nor found so convenient, as might be expected, the reason is, because it suits not always with the designs of a writer, which are no more perhaps than to make a *book*; to confound some arguments, and to keep others out of sight; to leave what is called an impression upon the reader, without any care to inform him of the proofs or principles by which his opinion should be governed. With such views it may be consistent to dispatch objections, by observing of some "that they are old," and therefore, like certain drugs, have lost, we may suppose, their strength; of others, that "they have long since received an answer;" which implies, to be sure, a confutation: to attack straggling remarks, and decline the main reasoning, as "mere declamation;" to pass by one passage because it is "long-winded," another because the answerer "has neither leisure nor inclination to enter into the discussion of it;" to produce extracts and quotations, which, taken alone, imperfectly, if at all, express their author's meaning; to dismiss a stubborn difficulty with a "reference," which ten to one the reader never looks at: and, lastly, in order to give the whole a certain fashionable air of candour and moderation, to make a concession<sup>a</sup> or two which nobody thanks him for, or yield up a few points which it is no longer any credit to maintain.

How far the writer with whom we have to do is concerned in this description, his readers will judge; he shall receive, how-

<sup>a</sup> Such as, that "if people keep their opinions to themselves, no man will hurt them," and the like. Answer, p. 45.



ever, from us that justice which he has not shown the author of the "Considerations," to have his arguments fully and distinctly stated and examined.

After complaining, as is usual on these occasions, of disappointment and dissatisfaction; the answerer sets out with an argument which comprises, we are told, in a "narrow compass," the whole merits of the question betwixt us; and which is neither more nor less than this, that "it is necessary that those who are to be ordained teachers in the church should be sound in the faith, and consequently that they should give to those who ordain them some proof and assurance that they are so, and that the method of this proof should be settled by public authority." Now the perfection of this sort of reasoning is, that it comes as well from the mouth of the pope's professor of divinity in the university of Bologna, as from the Clarendon press. A church has only, with our author, to call her creed the "faithful word," and it follows from Scripture that "we must hold it fast." Her dissatisfied sons, let her only denominate, as he does<sup>a</sup>, "vain talkers and deceivers," and St. Paul himself commands us "to stop their mouths." Every one that questions or opposes her decisions she pronounces, with him, a heretic, and "a man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." In like manner, calling her tenets "sound doctrine," or taking it for granted that they are so, (which the conclave at Rome can do as well as the convocation at London,) and "soundness in the faith being a necessary qualification in a Christian teacher," there is no avoiding the conclusion, that every "Christian teacher" (in, and out of the church too, if you can catch him, "soundness in the faith" being alike "necessary" in all) must have these tenets strapped about his neck by oaths and subscriptions. An argument which thus fights in any cause, or on either side, deserves no quarter. I have said, that this reasoning, and these applications of Scripture, are equally competent to the defenders of popery—they are more so. The popes, when they assumed the power of the apostles, laid claim also to their infallibility; and in this they were consistent. Protestant churches renounce with all their might this infallibility, whilst they apply to themselves every expression that describes it, and will not part with a jot of the authority which is built upon it. But to return to the terms of the argument

<sup>a</sup> Page 18.

—“Is it necessary that a Christian teacher should be sound in the faith?”

1. Not in nine instances out of ten to which the test is now extended. Nor,

2. If it were, is this the way to make him so; there being as little probability that the determinations of a set of men whose good fortune had advanced them to high stations in the church should be right, as the conclusions of private inquirers. Nor,

3. Were they actually right, is it possible to conceive how they can, upon this author's principles, produce the effect contended for, since “we set them not up as a rule of faith;”<sup>a</sup> since “they do not decide matters for us, nor bind them upon us;” since “they tie no man up from altering his opinion,” are “no ways inconsistent with the right of private judgement,” are, in a word, of no more authority than an old sermon; nor, consequently, much more effectual, either for the producing or securing of “soundness in the faith.”

The answerer, not trusting altogether to the strength of his “argument,” endeavours next to avail himself of a “concession” which he has gained, he imagines, from his adversary, and which he is pleased to look upon “as in a manner giving up the main point.” Our business, therefore, will be to show what this concession, as he calls it, amounts to, and wherein it differs from the “main point,” the requisition of subscription to established formularies. It is objected to the Articles of the Church of England, that they are at variance with the actual opinions both of the governors and members of that church; so much so, that the men who most faithfully and explicitly maintain these articles get persecuted for their singularity, excluded from orders, driven from universities, and are compelled to preach the established religion in fields and conventicles. Now this objection, which must cleave to every *fixed* formulary, might, we conceive, be removed if a test was substituted, supposing any test to be insisted upon, which could adapt itself to the opinions, and keep pace with the improvements of each succeeding age. This, in some measure, would be the case, if the governors of the church for the time being were authorized to receive from candidates for orders, declarations of their religious principles in their own words, and allowed, at their dis-

<sup>a</sup> Pages 10, 11, 13, 29.

cretion, to admit them into the ministry. Bishops being taken out of the lump of the community will generally be of the same leaven, and partake both of the opinions and moderation of the times they live in. This is the most that can be made of the concession ; and how this gives up the "main point," or indeed any thing, it is not easy to discover.

The next paragraph of the Answer attacks the account which the Considerations have given of the "rise" and "progress" of the custom in question ; "the reverse of which," the answerer tells us, "is the truth," and by way of proof gives his own account of the matter, which, so far from being the "reverse," is in effect, or very nearly, the same.

The reader shall see the two accounts side by side, and is desired to judge whether the author of the Considerations, so far from being confuted in this point, is even contradicted.

"The protestants, aware how greatly they were misrepresented and abused, began to think it necessary to repel the various calumnies that had been cast upon them, by setting forth some public Constitutions or Confessions, as a declaration of their faith and worship. And to make such declaration still more authentic, they likewise engaged themselves in a mutual bond of conformity to all these constitutions." Considerations, page 6.

"As some who set up for reformers had broached many erroneous and pestilent doctrines ; the Lutherans first, and after their example, other protestant churches, thought fit to draw up Confessions of Faith. And this they did, partly to acquit themselves of the scandal of abetting wild and seditious enthusiasts, and declaring what were their real doctrines ; partly" (observe how tenderly this is introduced) "to prevent such enthusiasts on the one hand, and popish emissaries on the other, from intruding themselves into the ministry." Answer, pages 6, 7.

Now were the "origin" of a custom of more consequence than it is to a question concerning the "propriety" of it, can any one doubt, who credits even the answerer's own account, but that the motive assigned in the Considerations both did exist, and was the principal motive ? There is one account, indeed, of the "origin" of this custom, which, were it true, would directly concern the question. "This practice," our author tells us in another part of his Answer<sup>a</sup>, "is said to be derived from the apostles themselves." I care not what "is said." It is impossible that the practice complained of, the imposition of articles of faith by "fallible" men, could originate from the "apostles," who, under the direction by which they acted, were "infallible."<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Page 19.

<sup>b</sup> How a creed is to be made, as the Considerations recommend, in which all



But this practice, from whatever "root of bitterness" it sprung, has been one of the chief causes, we assert, of the divisions and distresses which we read of in ecclesiastical history. The matter of fact our author does not, because he cannot, deny. He rather chooses to insinuate that "such divisions and disturbances were not owing to the governors of the church but to the perverse disputings of heretics and schismatics." He *must* know that there is oppression as well as resistance, provocation as well as resentment, abuse of power as well as opposition to it: and it is too much to take for granted, without one syllable of proof, that those in possession of power have been always in the right, and those who withstood them in the wrong. "Divisions" and "disturbances" have in fact, and in all ages, arisen on this account; and it is a poor shift to say, because it may always be said, that such only are chargeable with these mischiefs as refused to submit to whatever their superiors thought proper to impose<sup>a</sup>.

Nor is it much better when he tells us, "that these subtleties of metaphysical debate which we complain of in our Articles, were introduced by the several heretics of those times;" especially as it is evident that whoever first introduced, it is the governors of the church who still continue them.

But our author cannot conceive what all this, as relating to "creeds" only and "confessions," to the "terms of communion" rather than of admission into the ministry, is to the purpose.

parties shall agree, our author cannot understand. I will tell him how; by adhering to Scripture terms: and this will suit the best idea of a Creed, (a summary or compendium of a larger volume,) and the only fair purpose of one, *instruction*.

It is observed in the Considerations, that the multiplicity of the propositions contained in the thirty-nine Articles is alone sufficient to show the impossibility of that consent which the Church supposes and requires.—Now, what would any man guess is the answer to this? Why, "that there are no less than three propositions in the very first verse of St. John's Gospel." Had there been "three thousand," it would have been nothing to the purpose: where propositions are received upon the authority of the proposer, it matters not how many of them there are; the doubt is not increased with the number; the same reason which establishes one establishes all. But is this the case with a system of propositions which derives no evidence from the proposer? which must each stand upon its own separate and intrinsic proof?—We thought it necessary to oppose note to note in the place in which we found it; though neither here nor in the Answer is it much connected with the text.

<sup>a</sup> The following sentiment of our author is too curious to be omitted: "Possibly too he (the author of the Considerations) may think that insurrections and rebellions in the state are not owing to the unruliness of factious subjects, but to kings and rulers; but most reasonable men, I believe, will think otherwise."—A common reader may think this observation of the answerer a little beside the question. But the answerer may say, with Cicero and Dr. King, "*Suscepto negotio, majus mihi quiddam proposui, in quo meam in rempublicam voluntatem populus perspicere posset.*"—Motto to Dr. K.'s Oration in 1749.

Will he then give up “creeds” and “confessions?” or will his church thank him for it if he does? a church which, by transfusing the substance of her Articles into the form of her public worship, has in effect made the “terms of communion” and of admission into the ministry the same. This question, like every other, however naked you may strip it by abstraction, must always be considered with a reference to the practice you wish to reform.

The author of the *Considerations* contends very properly, that it is one of the first duties a Christian owes to his Master, “to keep his mind open and unbiassed” in religious inquiries. Can a man be said to do this, who must bring himself to assent to opinions proposed by another? who enters into a profession where both his subsistence and success depend upon his continuance in a particular persuasion? In answer to this we are informed, that these Articles are no “rule of faith;” (what! not to those who subscribe them?) that “the church deprives no man of his right of private judgement” (she cannot—she hangs, however, a dead weight upon it); that it is a “very unfair state of the case, to call subscription a declaration of our full and final persuasion in matters of faith; though if it be not a “full” persuasion, what is it? and ten to one it will be “final” when such consequences attend a change. That “no man is hereby tied up from impartially examining the word of God,” *i. e.* with the “impartiality” of a man who must “eat” or “starve,” according as the examination turns out; an “impartiality” so suspected, that a court of justice would not receive his evidence under half of the same influence: “nor from altering his opinion if he finds reason so to do;” which few, I conceive, will “find,” when the alteration must cost them so dear. If one could give credit to our author in what he says here and in some other passages of his *Answer*, one would suppose that, in his judgement at least, subscription restrained no man from adopting what opinion he pleased, provided “he does not think himself bound openly to maintain it:” that “men may retain their preferments, if they will but keep their opinions to themselves.” If this be what the church of England means, let her say so. This is indeed what our author admits here, and yet, from the outcry he has afterwards raised against all who continue in the church whilst they dissent from her Articles, one would not suppose there was a pardon left for those, who “keep even to themselves an opinion” inconsistent with any one proposition they

have subscribed. The fact is, the gentleman has either shifted his opinion in the course of writing the answer, or had put down these assertions, not expecting that he should have occasion afterwards to contradict them.

It seemed to add strength to this objection, that the judgement of most thinking men being in a progressive state, their opinions of course must many of them change; the evil and iniquity of which the answerer sets forth with great pleasantry, but has forgot at the same time to give us any remedy for the misfortune, except the old woman's receipt, to leave off thinking for fear of thinking wrong.

But our church "preaches," it seems, "no other Gospel than that which she received," nor "propounds any other Articles for Gospel," nor "fixes any standards or criterions of faith, separate from this Gospel: and so she herself fully declares;" and we are to take her "word" for it, when the very complaint is, that she has never "acted" up to this declaration, but in direct contradiction to it. When she puts forth a system of propositions conceived in a new dialect, and in unscriptural terms; when she ascribes to these the same evidence and certainty as to Scripture itself, or decrees and acts as if they were equally evident and certain; she incurs, we apprehend, the charge which these expressions imply. She claims indeed "authority in controversies of faith," but "only so far," says her apologist, as "to judge for herself what should be her own terms of communion, and what qualifications she shall require in her own ministers." All which, in plainer English, comes to this; that two or three men, betwixt two and three centuries ago, fixed a multitude of obscure and dubious propositions, which many millions after must bring themselves to believe, before they be permitted to share in the provision which the state has made (and to which all of every sect contribute) for regular opportunities of public worship, and the giving and receiving of public instruction. And this our author calls the magistrate's "judging for himself,"<sup>a</sup> and exercising the "same right as all other persons have to judge for themselves." For the reasonableness of it, however, he has nothing to offer, but that it "is no more than what other churches, popish" too, to strengthen the argument, "as well as protestant," have done before. He might have added, seeing "custom" is to determine the matter, that it had been "customary" too from early ages for Christians

<sup>a</sup> Page 26.



to anathematize and burn each other for difference of opinion in some points of faith, and for difference of practice in some points of ceremony.

We now accompany the learned answerer to what he is pleased to call the "main question," and which he is so much "puzzled to keep in sight." The argument<sup>a</sup> in favour of subscription, and the arbitrary exclusion of men from the church or ministry, drawn from the nature of a society and the rights incidental to society, our author resigns to its fate, and to the answer which has been given it in the Considerations. He contends only, that the conduct of the apostles in admitting the eunuch and the centurion upon a general profession of their faith in Christ, "has nothing to do with the case of subscription," as they were admitted, not into the ministry, but only the communion of the church. Now, in the first place, suppose the eunuch or centurion had taken upon them, as probably they did, to teach Christianity, would they have been inhibited by the apostles as not having given sufficient "proof or assurance of their soundness in the faith?" And if not, what becomes of the necessity of such "assurances from a Christian teacher?" In the second place, suppose you consider the church as one society, and its teachers as another, is it probable that those who were so tender in keeping any one out of the first, would have thought the argument we were encountering, or any thing else, a pretence for a right of arbitrary exclusion from the latter? The case of Cornelius, says our author, is "extraordinary; while St. Peter was preaching to him, the Holy Ghost fell upon all them which heard the word." And is not this author ashamed to own, that any are excluded from the communion, or even ministry, of the church, who would have been entitled by their faith "to the gifts of the Holy Ghost?"

The answerer in the next paragraph acknowledges, that to admit converts into the church upon this one article of faith, that Jesus is the Messiah, was indeed the practice of the apostles<sup>b</sup>; but then he tells us, what must sound a little odd to a

<sup>a</sup> What would any man in his wits think of this argument, if upon the strength of it they were to make a law, that none but red-haired people should be admitted into orders, or even into churches?

<sup>b</sup> Although the question, whether to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, be not the only necessary article of faith, is a question in which we have no concern; our author, with the best inclination in the world, not being able to fix such an opinion upon us; yet I cannot help observing, that he has put two of the oddest constructions upon the terms of the propositions that ever entered into the fancy of man to conceive. One is, which you may be sure he intends for his adversaries, "that it is necessary to believe Jesus to be a true prophet, yet not necessary

Christian ear, and comes the more awkwardly from this author, whom, if you turn over a page, you will find quoting the "practice of the apostles" with a vengeance: he tells us, I say, "that no argument can be drawn from the practice of the apostles."<sup>a</sup> Now with regard to the "practice of the apostles," and the application of it to ourselves, the case seems to be this, (the very reverse, observe, of our author's rule,) that we are always bound not "to go beyond" the precedent, though, for want of the same authority, we may not always "advance up to it." It surely at least becomes us to be cautious of "proceeding," where they, in the plenitude of their commission, thought proper to "stop."

It is alleged in the Considerations, that annexing emoluments to the profession of particular opinions is a strong and dangerous inducement to prevarication; and the danger is the greater, as prevarication in one instance has a tendency to relax the most sacred obligations, and make way for perfidy in every other. But "this," it seems, "has nothing to do with the question."<sup>b</sup> Why, it is the very question, Whether the magistrate ought to confine the provision he makes for religion to those who assent, or declare their assent, to a particular system of controverted divinity; and this is one direct objection against it. But "must the magistrate, then," exclaims our alarmed adversary, "establish no tithes, no rich benefices, no dignities, or bishoprics?" As many as he pleases, only let him not convert them into snares and traps by idle and unnecessary conditions. "But must he admit all persons indiscriminately to these advantages?" The author of the Considerations has told him, that he may require conformity to the liturgy, rites, and offices he shall prescribe: he may trust his officers with a discretion as to the religious principles of candidates for orders, similar to what they now exercise with regard to their qualifications: he may censure extravagant preaching when it "appears;" precautions surely sufficient either to keep the "wildest sectaries" out of the church, or prevent their doing any mischief if they get in. The exclusion of papists is a separate consideration. The laws against popery, as far as they are justifiable, proceed upon principles with which the author of the Considerations has nothing to do. Where, from the particular

to believe one doctrine that he has taught." Page 16. The other, which he means for himself, is, that "by the Messiah we are to understand the only begotten Son of God, anointed, and sent by the Father to make propitiation for the sins of the whole world."

<sup>a</sup> Page 16.

<sup>b</sup> Pages 19, 20.

circumstances of a country, attachments and dispositions hostile and dangerous to the state are accidentally, or otherwise connected with certain opinions in religion, it may be necessary to lay encumbrances and restraints upon the profession or propagation of such opinions. Where a great part of any sect or religious order of men are enemies to the constitution, and you have no way of distinguishing those who are not so, it is right perhaps to fence the whole order out of your civil and religious establishment: it is the right at least of self-defence, and of extreme necessity. But even this is not on account of the religious opinions themselves, but as they are probable marks, and the only marks you have, of designs and principles which it is necessary to disarm. I would observe, however, that in proportion as this connexion between the civil and religious principles of the papists is dissolved, in the same proportion ought the state to mitigate the hardships and relax the restraints to which they are made subject.

If we complain of severities, of pains and penalties, the answerer cannot discover "whom or what we mean:" and lest his reader should, by a figure extremely well known in the craft of controversy, he proposes a string of questions in the person of his adversary, to which he gives his own peremptory and definitive NO<sup>a</sup>. We will take a method, not altogether so compendious, but, we trust, somewhat more satisfactory. We will repeat the same questions, and let the church and state answer for themselves. First then,

"Does our church or our government inflict any corporeal punishment, or levy any fines or penalties on those who will not comply with the terms of her communion?"—"Be it enacted, that all and every person or persons that shall neglect or refuse to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the usage of the Church of England, and yet, after such neglect or refusal, shall execute any office or offices, civil or military, after the times be expired wherein he or they ought to have taken the same, shall, upon conviction thereof, besides the loss of the office, forfeit the sum of five hundred pounds."<sup>b</sup> Stat. 25 Car. II. c. 2. Now, although starving be no "corporeal punishment," nor the loss of all a man has a "fine," or "penalty," yet depriving men of the common benefits of society, and rights

<sup>a</sup> Page 21.

<sup>b</sup> This and the Corporation Act, an otherwise excellent person calls the laws which secure both our civil and religious liberties. Blackstone's Comm. vol. iv. p. 432.



even of lay subjects, because "they will not comply with the terms of church communion," is a "severity," that might have deserved from our author some other apology besides the mere suppression of the fact.

2. "Doth it deny them the right or privilege of worshipping God in their own way?"—"Whoever shall take upon him to preach or teach in any meeting, assembly, or conventicle, and shall thereof be convicted, shall forfeit for the first offence twenty pounds, and for every other offence forty pounds." Stat. 22 Car. II. c. 1.—"No person shall presume to consecrate or administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper before he be ordained priest, after the manner of the church of England, on pain of forfeiting one hundred pounds for every such offence." Stat. 13 & 14 Car. II. c. 4. These laws are in full force against all who do not subscribe to the 39 articles of the Church of England, except the 34th, 35th, and 36th, and part of the 20th Article.

3. "Are men denied the liberty of free debate?"—"If any person, having been educated in, or at any time having made profession of, the Christian faith within the realm, shall by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking, deny any one of the persons of the Holy Trinity to be God—he shall for the first offence be disabled to hold any office or employment, or any profit appertaining thereto; for the second offence shall be disabled to prosecute any action or information in any court of law or equity, or to be guardian of any child, or executor or administrator of any person, or capable of any legacy or deed of gift, or to bear any office for ever within this realm, and shall also suffer imprisonment for the space of three years from the time of such conviction." Stat. 9 & 10 Will. III. c. 32.

It has been thought to detract considerably from the pretended use of these subscriptions, that they excluded none but the conscientious; a species of men more wanted, we conceive, than formidable to any religious establishment. This objection applies equally, says our answerer<sup>a</sup>, to the "oaths of allegiance and supremacy;" and so far as it does apply, it ought to be attended to; and the truth is, these oaths might in many instances be spared without either danger or detriment to the community. There is, however, an essential difference between the two cases: a scruple concerning the oath of allegiance implies principles which may excite to acts of hostility against the

<sup>a</sup> Page 22.

state : a scruple about the truth of the articles implies no such thing<sup>a</sup>.

Our author, good man, "is well persuaded that the generality of the clergy, when they offer themselves for ordination, consider seriously what office they take upon them, and firmly believe what they subscribe to." I am persuaded much otherwise. But as this is a "fact," the reader, if he be wise, will neither take the answerer's word for it, nor mine ; but form his own judgement from his own observation. Bishop Burnet complained above 60 years ago, that "the greater part," even then, "subscribed the Articles without ever examining them<sup>b</sup>, and others did it because they must do it." Is it probable, that in point either of seriousness or orthodoxy, the clergy are much mended since ?

The pleas offered in support of this practice of subscription come next to be considered. "One of these is drawn from the sacred writings being capable of such a variety of senses, that men of widely different persuasions shelter themselves under the same forms of expression." Our author, after quarrelling with this representation of the plea, gives his readers, in its stead, a long quotation from the archdeacon of Oxford's charge<sup>c</sup>. What he is to gain by the change, or the quotation, I cannot perceive, as the same first query still recurs, "Is it true, that the Scriptures are in reality so differently interpreted in points of real consequence?" In answer to which, the archdeacon of Oxford, we are told, "has shown that points of real consequence are differently interpreted," and "the plainest texts explained away," and has "instanced in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel." The plea, we conceive, is not much indebted to the archdeacon of Oxford. But be these Scriptures interpreted as they will, each man has still a right to interpret them for himself. The Church of Rome, who always pushed her conclusions with a courage and consistency unknown to the timid patrons of protestant imposition, saw immediately, that as the laity had no right to interpret the Scriptures, they could have no occasion to read them, and therefore very properly locked them up from the intrusion of popular curiosity. Our author cites the above-

<sup>a</sup> The answerer might have found a parallel below in some other oaths, which he does not care to speak of, viz. the case of college statutes, page 34 of the Considerations.

<sup>b</sup> Burnett's History of his Own Times—Conclusion.

<sup>c</sup> See this whole Charge answered in the London Chronicle, by Priscilla. The Lord hath sold Sisera into the hand of a woman !

mentioned query from the Considerations as the *first* query which would lead his reader to expect a *second*. The reader, however, may seek that second for himself, the answerer is not obliged to produce it—it stands thus: Suppose the Scriptures thus variously interpreted, does subscription mend the matter? The reader too is left to find an answer for himself.

The next, the strongest, the only tolerable plea for subscription is, “that all sorts of pestilent heresies might be taught from the pulpit, if no such restraint as this was laid upon the preacher.”<sup>a</sup> How far it is probable that this would be the consequence of removing the subscription, and by what other means it might be guarded against, has been hinted already, and will again be considered in another place. We will here only take notice of one particular expedient suggested in the Considerations, and which has often indeed elsewhere been proposed, namely, “that the church, instead of requiring subscription beforehand, to the present, or to any other Articles of faith, might censure her clergy afterwards, if they opposed or vilified them in their preaching.” The advantage of which scheme above the present is manifest, if it was only for this reason, that you distress and corrupt thousands now, for one that you would ever have occasion to punish. Our author, nevertheless, “is humbly of opinion that it is much better to take proper precautions beforehand:” he must, with all his “humility,” know that when it has been proposed to take proper precautions of the press, by subjecting authors to an *imprimatur* before publication, instead of punishment after it; the proposal has been resented, as an open attack upon the rights and interests of mankind. The common sense and spirit of the nation could see and feel this distinction and the importance of it, in the case of publishers; and why preachers should be left in a worse situation, is not very easy to say.

The example of the Arminian confession is, upon this occasion, recommended by the author of the Considerations; a confession which was compiled for the edification and instruction of the members of that church, without peremptorily insisting upon any one’s assent to it. But it is the misfortune of the Arminian to be no national church—the misfortune, alas! of Christianity herself in her purest period; when she was under the government of the apostles; without alliance with the states

<sup>a</sup> Page 26.



of this world ; when she composed, nevertheless, a church as real, we conceive, and as respectable, as any national church that has existed since.

Our author, who can much sooner make a distinction than see one, does not comprehend, it seems, any difference between confessions of faith and preaching, as to the use of unscriptural terms. Did a preacher, when he had finished his sermon, call upon his congregation to subscribe their names and assent to it, or never to come more within the doors of his church ; there would, indeed, be some sort of resemblance betwixt the two cases : but as the hearers are at liberty to believe preachers or no, as they see, or he produces, reasons for what he says ; there can be no harm, and there is a manifest utility, in trusting him with the liberty of explaining his own meaning in his own terms.

We now come, and with the tenderest regret, to the case of those who continue in the church without being able to reconcile to their belief every proposition imposed upon them by subscription ; over whose distress our author is pleased to indulge a wanton and ungenerous triumph. They had presumed, it seems, that it was some apology for their conduct, that they sincerely laboured to render to religion their best services, and thought their present stations the fairest opportunities of performing it. This may not, perhaps, amount to a complete vindication : it certainly does not fully satisfy even their own scruples : else where would be the cause of complaint ? What need of relief, or what reason for their petitions ? It might have been enough, however, to have exempted them from being absurdly and indecently compared with faithless hypocrites, with Papists, and Jesuits, who, for other purposes, and with even opposite designs, are supposed to creep into the church through the same door. For the fullest and fairest representation of their case, I refer our author to the excellent Hoadly ; or, as Hoadly possibly may be no book in our author's library, will it provoke his "raillery" to ask, what he thinks might be the consequence, if all were at once to withdraw themselves from the church who were dissatisfied with her doctrines ? Might not the church lose, what she can ill spare, the service of many able and industrious ministers ? Would those she retained be such as acquiesced in her decisions from inquiry and conviction ? Would not many or most of them be those who keep out of the way of religious scruples by lives of secularity

and voluptuousness? by mixing with the crowd in the most eager of their pursuits after pleasure or advantage? One word with the answerer before we part upon this head. Whence all this great inquisitiveness, this solicitude to be acquainted with the person, the opinions, and associates of his adversary? Whence that impertinent wish that he had been "more explicit in particular with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity?" Is it out of a pious desire to fasten some heresy, or the imputation of it, upon him? Is he "called out of the clouds" to be committed to the flames?<sup>a</sup>

The 40th page of the Answer introduces a paragraph of considerable length, the sum, however, and substance of which is this – that if subscription to articles of faith were removed, confusion would ensue; the people would be distracted with the disputes of their teachers, and the pulpits filled with controversy and contradiction. Upon this "fact" we join issue, and the more readily as this is a sort of reasoning we all understand. The extent of the legislator's right may be an abstruse inquiry; but whether a law does more good or harm, is a plain question which every man can ask. Now, that distressing many of the clergy, and corrupting others; that keeping out of churches good Christians and faithful citizens; that making parties in the state, by giving occasion to sects and separations in religion; that these are inconveniences, no man in his senses will deny. The question therefore is, what advantage do you find in the opposite scale to balance these inconveniences? The simple advantage pretended is, that you hereby prevent "wringling" and contention in the pulpit. Now, in the first place, I observe that allowing this evil to be as grievous and as certain as you please, the most that can be necessary for the prevention of it is, to enjoin your preachers, as to such points, silence and neutrality. In the next place, I am convinced that the danger is greatly magnified. We hear little of these points at present in our churches and public teaching, and it is not probable that leaving them at large would elevate them into more importance,

<sup>a</sup> We were unwilling to decline the defence of the persons here described, though the expression in the Considerations which brought on the attack manifestly related to a different subject. The author of the Considerations speaks of "being bound" to "keep up" these forms until relieved by proper authority; of "ministerially" complying with what we are not able to remove; alluding, no doubt, to the case of Church Governors, who are the instruments of imposing a subscription which they may disapprove. But the answerer, taking it for granted, that "ministerially complying" meant the compliance of ministers, i. e. of clergymen officiating in their functions, has, by a quibble, or a blunder, transferred the passage to a sense for which it was not intended.

or make it more worth men's while to quarrel about them. They would sleep in the same grave with many other questions, of equal importance with themselves, or sink back into their proper place, into topics of speculation, or matters of debate from the press. None but men of some reflection would be forward to engage in such subjects, and the least reflection would teach a man that preaching is not the proper vehicle of controversy. Even at present, says our author, "we speak and write what we please with impunity." And where is the mischief? or what worse could ensue if subscription were removed? Nor can I discover any thing in the disposition of the petitioning clergy that need alarm our apprehensions. If they are impatient under the yoke, it is not from a desire to hold forth their opinions to their congregations, but that they may be at liberty to entertain them themselves, without offence to their consciences, or ruin to their fortunes.

Our author has added, by way of make-weight to his argument, "that many common Christians," he believes, "would be greatly scandalized if you take away their creeds and catechisms, and strike out of the liturgy such things as they have always esteemed essential."<sup>a</sup> Whatever reason there may be for this belief at present, there certainly was much greater at the Reformation, as the popish ritual, which was then "taken away," had a fascination and antiquity which ours cannot pretend to. Many were probably "scandalized" at parting with their beads and their mass-books, that lived afterwards to thank those who taught them better things. Reflection, we hope, in some, and time, we are sure, in all, will reconcile men to alterations established in reason. If there be any danger, it is from some of the clergy, who, with the answerer, would rather suffer the "vineyard" to be overgrown with "weeds," than "stir the ground," or, what is worse, call these weeds "the fairest flowers in the garden." Such might be ready enough to raise a hue and cry against all innovators in religion, as "overturners of churches" and spoilers of temples.

But the cause which of all others stood most in the way of the late petitions for relief, was an apprehension that religious institutions cannot be disturbed without awakening animosities and dissensions in the state, of which no man knows the consequence. Touch but religion, we are told, and it bursts forth into a flame. Civil distractions may be composed by fortitude



and perseverance ; but neither reason nor authority can control, there is neither charm nor drug which will assuage, the passions of mankind when called forth in the cause and to the battles of religion. We were concerned to hear this language from some who, in other instances, have manifested a constancy and resolution which no confusion, nor ill aspect of public affairs, could intimidate. After all, is there any real foundation for these terrors ? Is not this whole danger, like the lion of the slothful, the creature of our fears, and the excuse of indolence ? Was it proposed to make articles instead of removing them, there would be room for the objection. But it is obvious that subscription to the 39 Articles might be altered or withdrawn upon general principles of justice and expediency, without reviving one religious controversy, or calling into dispute a single proposition they contain. Who should excite disturbances ? Those who are relieved will not ; and, unless subscription were like a tax, which, being taken from one, must be laid with additional weight upon another, is it probable that any will complain that they are oppressed, because their brethren are relieved ? or that those who are so “ strong in the faith ” will refuse to “ bear with the infirmities of the weak ? ” The few who upon principles of this sort opposed the application of the Dissenters, were repulsed from parliament with disdain, even by those who were no friends to the application itself.

The question concerning the object of worship is attended, I confess, with difficulty : it seems almost directly to divide the worshippers. But let the Church pare down her excrescences till she comes to this question ; let her discharge from her liturgy controversies unconnected with devotion ; let her try what may be done for all sides, by worshipping God in that generality <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> If a Christian can think it an intolerable thing to worship one God through one mediator Jesus Christ, in company with any such as differ from him in their notions about the metaphysical nature of Christ, or of the Holy Ghost, or the like ; I am sorry for it. I remember the like objection made at the beginning of the Reformation by the Lutherans against the lawfulness of communicating with Zuinglius and his followers, because they had not the same notion with them of the elements in the sacrament. And there was the same objection once against holding communion with any such as had not the same notions with themselves about the secret decrees of God relating to the predestination and reprobation of particular persons. But whatever those men may please themselves with thinking who are sure they are arrived at the perfect knowledge of the most abstruse points, this they may be certain of ; that in the present state of the church, even supposing only such as are accounted orthodox to be joined together in one visible communion, they communicate together with a very great variety and confusion of notions, either comprehending nothing plain and distinct, or differing from one another as truly and essentially as others differ from them all ; nay, with more certain difference with relation to the object of worship than if all prayers were

of expression in which he himself has left some points; let her dismiss many of her Articles, and convert those which she retains into terms of peace; let her recall the terrors she suspended over freedom of inquiry; let the toleration she allows to dissenters be made "absolute;" let her invite men to search the Scriptures; let her governors encourage the studious and learned of all persuasions:—Let her do this—and she will be secure of the thanks of her own clergy, and, what is more, of their sincerity. A greater consent may grow out of inquiry than many at present are aware of; and the few who, after all, shall think it necessary to recede from our communion, will acknowledge the necessity to be inevitable; will respect the equity and moderation of the established church, and live in peace with all its members.

I know not whether I ought to mention, among so many more serious reasons, that even the governors of the church themselves would find their ease and account in consenting to an alteration.—For besides the difficulty of defending those decayed fortifications, and the indecency of deserting them, they either are or will soon find themselves in the situation of a master of a family, whose servants know more of his secrets than it is proper for them to know, and whose whispers and whose threats must be bought off at an expense which will drain the "apostolic chamber" dry.

Having thus examined in their order, and, as far as I understood them, the several answers<sup>a</sup> given by our author to the objections against the present mode of subscription, it now remains, by way of summing up the evidence, to bring "forward"

directed (as Bishop Bull says almost all were in the first ages) to God or the Father, through the Son.—Hoadly's Answer to Dr. Hare's Sermon.

<sup>a</sup> In his last note our author breaks forth into "astonishment" and indignation, at the "folly, injustice, and indecency" of comparing our church to the Jewish in our Saviour's time, and even to the "tower of Babel;" mistaking the church, in this last comparison, for one of her monuments (which indeed, with most people of his complexion, stands for the same thing) erected to prevent our dispersion from that grand centre of catholic dominion, or, in the words of a late celebrated castle-builder, "to keep us together." If there be any "indecency" in such a comparison, it must be chargeable on those who lead us to it, by making use of the same terms with the original architects, and to which the author of the Considerations evidently alludes. This detached note is concluded with as detached, and no less curious, an observation, which the writer thinks may be a "sufficient answer" to the whole, namely, that the author of the Considerations "has wrought no miracles for the conviction of the answerer and his associates." For what purpose this observation can be "sufficient," it is not easy to guess, except it be designed to insinuate, what may perhaps really be the case, that no less than a miracle will serve to cast out that kind of spirit which has taken so full possession of them, or ever bring them to a sound mind, and a sincere love of truth.

certain other arguments contained in the Considerations, to which no answer has been attempted. It is contended, then,

- I. That stating any doctrine in a confession of faith with a greater degree of "precision" than the Scriptures have done, is in effect to say, that the Scriptures have not stated it with "precision" enough; in other words, that the Scriptures are not sufficient.—"Mere declamation."
- II. That this experiment of leaving men at liberty, and points of doctrine at large, has been attended with the improvement of religious knowledge, where and whenever it has been tried. And to this cause, so far as we can see, is owing the advantage which protestant countries in this respect possess above their popish neighbours.—No answer.
- III. That keeping people out of churches who might be admitted consistently with every end of public worship, and excluding men from communion who desire to embrace it upon the terms that God prescribes, is certainly not encouraging, but rather causing men to forsake, the assembling of themselves together.—No answer.
- IV. That men are deterred from searching the Scriptures by the fear of finding there more or less than they look for; that is, something inconsistent with what they have already given their assent to, and must at their peril abide by.—No answer.
- V. That it is not giving truth a fair chance to decide points at one certain time, and by one set of men, which had much better be left to the successive inquiries of different ages and different persons.—No answer.
- VI. That it tends to multiply infidels amongst us, by exhibiting Christianity under a form and in a system which many are disgusted with, who yet will not be at the pains to inquire after any other.—No answer.

At the conclusion of his pamphlet our author is pleased to acknowledge, what few, I find, care any longer to deny, "that there are some things in our Articles and Liturgy which he should be glad to see amended, many which he should be willing to give up to the scruples of others," but that the heat and violence with which redress has been pursued, preclude all hope of accommodation and tranquillity—that "we had better wait, therefore, for more peaceable times, and be contented with our present constitution as it is," until a fairer prospect shall ap-



pear of changing it for the better.—After returning thanks, in the name of the “fraternity,” to him and to all who touch the burden of subscription with but one of their fingers, I would wish to leave with them this observation: that as the man who attacks a flourishing establishment writes with a halter round his neck; few ever will be found to attempt alterations but men of more spirit than prudence, of more sincerity than caution, of warm, eager, and impetuous tempers; that, consequently, if we are to wait for improvement till the cool, the calm, the discreet part of mankind begin it, till church governors solicit, or ministers of state propose it—I will venture to pronounce, that (without *His* interposition with whom nothing is impossible) we may remain as we are till the “renovation of all things.”

REASONS  
FOR  
CONTENTMENT,  
ADDRESSED  
TO THE LABOURING PART OF THE BRITISH PUBLIC.





REASONS  
FOR  
CONTENTMENT.

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HUMAN life has been said to resemble the situation of spectators in a theatre, where, whilst each person is engaged by the scene which passes before him, no one thinks about the place in which he is seated. It is only when the business is interrupted, or when the spectator's attention to it grows idle and remiss, that he begins to consider at all, who is before him or who is behind him, whether others are better accommodated than himself, or whether many be not much worse. It is thus with the various ranks and stations of society. So long as a man is intent upon the duties and concerns of his own condition, he never thinks of comparing it with any other; he is never troubled with reflections upon the different classes and orders of mankind, the advantages and disadvantages of each, the necessity or non-necessity of civil distinctions, much less does he feel within himself a disposition to covet or envy any of them. He is too much taken up with the occupations of his calling, its pursuits, cares, and business, to bestow unprofitable meditations upon the circumstances in which he sees others placed. And by this means a man of a sound and active mind has, in his very constitution, a remedy against the disturbance of envy and discontent. These passions gain no admittance into his breast, because there is no leisure there or vacancy for the trains of thought which generate them. He enjoys, therefore, ease in this respect, and ease resulting from the best cause, the power of keeping his imagination at home; of confining it to what belongs to himself, instead of sending it forth to wander amongst speculations which have neither limits nor use, amidst views of unattainable grandeur, fancied happiness, of extolled, because unexperienced, privileges and delights.

The wisest advice that can be given is, never to allow our attention to dwell upon comparisons between our own condition and that of others, but to keep it fixed upon the duties and concerns of the condition itself. But since every man has not this power; since the minds of some men will be busy in contemplating the advantages which they see others possess; and since persons in laborious stations of life are wont to view the higher ranks of society, with sentiments which not only tend to make themselves unhappy, but which are very different from the truth; it may be an useful office to point out to them some of those considerations which, if they *will* turn their thoughts to the subject, they should endeavour to take fairly into the account.

And, first; we are most of us apt to murmur when we see exorbitant fortunes placed in the hands of single persons; larger; we are sure, than they can want, or, as we think, than they can use. This is so common a reflection, that I will not say it is not natural. But whenever the complaint comes into our minds, we ought to recollect, that the thing happens in consequence of those very rules and laws which secure to ourselves our property, be it ever so small. The laws which accidentally cast enormous estates into one great man's possession, are, after all, the self-same laws which protect and guard the poor man. Fixed rules of property are established for one as well as another, without knowing, beforehand, whom they may affect. If these rules sometimes throw an excessive or disproportionate share to one man's lot, who can help it? It is much better that it should be so, than that the rules themselves should be broken up: and you can only have one side of the alternative or the other. To abolish riches, would not be to abolish poverty; but, on the contrary, to leave it without protection or resource. It is not for the poor man to repine at the effects of laws and rules, by which he himself is benefited every hour of his existence; which secure to him his earnings, his habitation, his bread, his life; without which he, no more than the rich man, could either eat his meal in quietness, or go to bed in safety. Of the two, it is rather more the concern of the poor to stand up for the laws, than of the rich; for it is the law which defends the weak against the strong, the humble against the powerful, the little against the great; and weak and strong, humble and powerful, little and great, there would be, even were there no laws whatever. Beside, what, after all, is the mischief? The owner of a great estate does not eat or drink more than the owner of a small one. His fields do

not produce worse crops, nor does the produce maintain fewer mouths. If estates were more equally divided, would greater numbers be fed, or clothed, or employed? Either, therefore, large fortunes are not a public evil, or, if they be in any degree an evil, it is to be borne with, for the sake of those fixed and general rules concerning property, in the preservation and steadiness of which all are interested.

Fortunes, however, of any kind, from the nature of the thing, can only fall to the lot of a few. I say, "from the nature of the thing." The very utmost that can be done by laws and government, is to enable every man, who hath health, to procure a healthy subsistence for himself and a family. Where this is the case, things are at their perfection. They have reached their limit. Were the princes and nobility, the legislators and counsellors of the land, all of them the best and wisest men that ever lived, their united virtue and wisdom could do no more than this. They, if any such there be, who would teach you to expect more, give you no instance where more has ever been attained.

But Providence, which foresaw, which appointed, indeed, the necessity to which human affairs are subjected, (and against which it were impious to complain,) hath contrived, that whilst fortunes are only for a few, the rest of mankind may be happy without them. And this leads me to consider the comparative advantages and comforts which belong to the condition of those who subsist, as the great mass of every people do and must subsist, by personal labour, and the solid reasons they have for contentment in their stations. I do not now use the terms poor and rich : because that man is to be accounted poor, of whatever rank he be, and suffers the pains of poverty, whose expenses exceed his resources ; and no man is, properly speaking, poor but he. But I, at present, consider the advantages of those laborious conditions of life which compose the great portion of every human community.

And, first ; it is an inestimable blessing of such situations, that they supply a constant train of employment both to body and mind. A husbandman, or a manufacturer, or a tradesman, never goes to bed at night without having his business to rise up to in the morning. He would understand the value of this advantage, did he know that the want of it composes one of the greatest plagues of the human soul ; a plague by which the rich, especially those who inherit riches, are exceedingly oppressed.



Indeed it is to get rid of it, that is to say, it is to have something to do, that they are driven upon those strange and unaccountable ways of passing their time, in which we sometimes see them, to our surprise, engaged. A poor man's condition supplies him with that which no man can do without, and with which a rich man, with all his opportunities, and all his contrivance, can hardly supply himself; regular engagement, business to look forward to, something to be done for every day, some employment prepared for every morning. A few of better judgement can seek out for themselves constant and useful occupation. There is not one of you takes the pains in his calling which some of the most independent men in the nation have taken, and are taking, to promote what they deem to be a point of great concern to the interests of humanity, by which neither they nor theirs can ever gain a shilling, and which, should they succeed, those who are to be benefited by their service will neither know nor thank them for it. I only mention this to show, in conjunction with what has been observed above, that, of those who are at liberty to act as they please, the wise prove, and the foolish confess, by their conduct, that a life of employment is the only life worth leading; and that the chief difference between their manner of passing their time and yours is, that they can choose the objects of their activity, which you cannot. This privilege may be an advantage to some, but for nine out of ten it is fortunate that occupation is provided to their hands, that they have it not to seek, that it is imposed upon them by their necessities and occasions; for the consequence of liberty in this respect would be, that, lost in the perplexity of choosing, they would sink into irrecoverable indolence, inaction, and unconcern; into that vacancy and tiresomeness of time and thought which are inseparable from such a situation. A man's thoughts must be going. Whilst he is awake, the working of his mind is as constant as the beating of his pulse. He can no more stop the one than the other. Hence if our thoughts have nothing to act upon, they act upon ourselves. They acquire a corrosive quality. They become in the last degree irksome and tormenting. Wherefore that sort of equitable engagement which takes up the thought sufficiently, yet so as to leave them capable of turning to any thing more important, as occasions offer or require, is a most invaluable blessing. And if the industrious be not sensible of the blessing, it is for no other reason than because they have never experienced, or rather suffered, the want of it.

Again ; some of the necessities which poverty (if the condition of the labouring part of mankind must be so called) imposes are not hardships, but pleasures. Frugality itself is a pleasure. It is an exercise of attention and contrivance, which, whenever it is successful, produces satisfaction. The very care and forecast that are necessary to keep expenses and earnings upon a level form, when not embarrassed by too great difficulties, an agreeable engagement of the thoughts. This is lost amidst abundance. There is no pleasure in taking out of a large unmeasured fund. They who do that, and only that, are the mere conveyers of money from one hand to another.

A yet more serious advantage, which persons in inferior stations possess, is the ease with which they provide for their children. All the provision which a poor man's child requires is contained in two words, "industry and innocence." With these qualities, though without a shilling to set him forwards, he goes into the world prepared to become an useful, virtuous, and happy man. Nor will he fail to meet with a maintenance adequate to the habits with which he has been brought up, and to the expectations which he has formed ; a degree of success sufficient for a person of any condition whatever. These qualities of industry and innocence, which, I repeat again, are all that are absolutely necessary, every parent can give to his children without expense, because he can give them by his own authority and example ; and they are to be communicated, I believe, and preserved, in no other way. I call this a serious advantage of humble stations ; because, in what we reckon superior ranks of life, there is a real difficulty in placing children in situations which may in any degree support them in the class and in the habits in which they have been brought up by their parents : from which great and oftentimes distressing perplexity the poor are free. With health of body, innocence of mind, and habits of industry, a poor man's child has nothing to be afraid of ; nor his father or mother any thing to be afraid of for him.

The labour of the world is carried on by *service*, that is, by one man working under another man's direction. I take it for granted that this is the best way of conducting business, because all nations and ages have adopted it. Consequently service is the relation which, of all others, affects the greatest numbers of individuals, and in the most sensible manner. In whatever country, therefore, this relation is well and equitably regulated, in that country the poor will be happy. Now how is the matter

managed with us? Except apprenticeships, the necessity of which every one, at least every father and mother, will acknowledge, as the best, if not the only practicable, way of gaining instruction and skill, and which have their foundation in *nature*; because they have their foundation in the *natural* ignorance and imbecility of youth; except these, service in England is, as it ought to be, voluntary and by contract; a fair exchange of work for wages; an equal bargain, in which each party has his rights and his redress; wherein every servant chooses his master. Can this be mended? I will add, that a continuance of this connexion is frequently the foundation of so much mutual kindness and attachment, that very few friendships are more cordial, or more sincere; that it leaves oftentimes nothing in servitude except the name; nor any distinction but what one party is as much pleased with, and sometimes also as proud of, as the other.

What then (for this is the fair way of calculating) is there in higher stations to place against these advantages? What does the poor man see in the life or condition of the rich, that should render him dissatisfied with his own?

Was there as much in sensual pleasures, I mean in the luxuries of eating and drinking, and other gratifications of that sort, as some men's imaginations would represent them to be, but which no man's experience finds in them, I contend, that even in these respects, the advantage is on the side of the poor. The rich, who addict themselves to indulgence, lose their relish. Their desires are dead. Their sensibilities are worn and tired. Hence they lead a languid satiated existence. Hardly any thing can amuse, or rouse, or gratify them. Whereas the poor man, if something extraordinary fall in his way, comes to the repast with appetite; is pleased and refreshed; derives from his usual course of moderation and temperance a quickness of perception and delight which the unrestrained voluptuary knows nothing of. Habits of all kinds are much the same. Whatever is habitual becomes smooth and indifferent, and nothing more. The luxurious receive no greater pleasures from their dainties than the peasant does from his homely fare.—But here is the difference: The peasant, whenever he goes abroad, finds a feast, whereas the epicure must be sumptuously entertained to escape disgust. They who spend every day in diversions, and they who go every day about their usual business, pass their time much alike. Attending to what they are about, wanting nothing,



regretting nothing, they are both, whilst engaged, in a state of ease; but then, whatever suspends the pursuits of the man of diversion distresses him; whereas to the labourer, or the man of business, every pause is a recreation. And this is a vast advantage which they possess who are trained and inured to a life of occupation, above the man who sets up for a life of pleasure. Variety is soon exhausted. Novelty itself is no longer new. Amusements are become too familiar to delight, and he is in a situation in which he can never change but for the worse.

Another article which the poor are apt to envy in the rich is their *ease*. Now here they mistake the matter totally. They call inaction ease, whereas nothing is farther from it. Rest is ease. That is true; but no man can rest who has not worked. Rest is the cessation of labour. It cannot therefore be enjoyed, or even tasted, except by those who have known fatigue. The rich see, and not without envy, the refreshment and pleasure which rest affords to the poor, and choose to wonder that they cannot find the same enjoyment in being free from the necessity of working at all. They do not observe that this enjoyment must be purchased by previous labour, and that he who will not pay the price cannot have the gratification. Being without work is one thing; reposing from work is another. The one is as tiresome and insipid as the other is sweet and soothing. The one, in general, is the fate of the rich man; the other is the fortune of the poor. I have heard it said, that if the face of happiness can any where be seen, it is in the summer evening of a country village; where, after the labours of the day, each man at his door, with his children, amongst his neighbours, feels his frame and his heart at rest, every thing about him pleased and pleasing, and a delight and complacency in his sensations far beyond what either luxury or diversion can afford. The rich want this; and they want what they must never have.

As to some other things which the poor are disposed to envy in the condition of the rich, such as their state, their appearance, the grandeur of their houses, dress, equipage and attendance, they only envy the rich these things because they do not know the rich. They have not opportunities of observing with what neglect and insensibility the rich possess and regard these things themselves. If they could see the great man in his retirement, and in his actual manner of life, they would find him, if pleased at all, taking pleasure in some of those simple

enjoyments which they can command as well as he. They would find him amongst his children, in his husbandry, in his garden, pursuing some rural diversion, or occupied with some trifling exercise; which are all gratifications, as much within the power and reach of the poor man as of the rich, or rather more so.

To learn the art of contentment is only to learn what happiness actually consists in. Sensual pleasures add little to its substance. Ease, if by that be meant exemption from labour, contributes nothing. One, however, constant spring of satisfaction, and almost infallible support of cheerfulness and spirits, is the exercise of domestic affections; the presence of objects of tenderness and endearment in our families, our kindred, our friends. Now have the poor any thing to complain of here? Are they not surrounded by their relatives as generally as others? The poor man has his wife and children about him; and what has the rich more? He has the same enjoyment of their society, the same solicitude for their welfare, the same pleasure in their good qualities, improvement, and success: their connexion with him is as strict and intimate, their attachment as strong, their gratitude as warm. I have no propensity to envy any one, least of all the rich and great; but if I were disposed to this weakness, the subject of my envy would be a healthy young man, in full possession of his strength and faculties, going forth in a morning to work for his wife and children, or bringing them home his wages at night.

But was difference of rank or fortune of more importance to personal happiness than it is, it would be ill purchased by any sudden or violent change of condition. An alteration of circumstances, which breaks up a man's habits of life, deprives him of his occupation, removes him from his acquaintance, may be called an elevation of fortune, but hardly ever brings with it an addition of enjoyment. They to whom accidents of this sort have happened never found them to answer their expectations. After the first hurry of the change is over, they are surprised to feel in themselves listlessness and dejection, a consciousness of solitude, vacancy, and restraint, in the place of cheerfulness, liberty, and ease. They try to make up for what they have lost, sometimes by a beastly sottishness, sometimes by a foolish dissipation, sometimes by a stupid sloth; all which effects are only so many confessions, that changes of this sort were not made for man. If any public disturbance

should produce, not an equality, (for that is not the proper name to give it,) but a jumble of ranks and professions amongst us, it is not only evident what the rich would lose, but there is also this further misfortune, that what the rich lost the poor would not gain. I (God knows) could not get my livelihood by labour, nor would the labourer find any solace or enjoyment in my studies. If we were to exchange conditions to-morrow, all the effect would be, that we both should be more miserable, and the work of both be worse done. Without debating, therefore, what might be very difficult to decide, which of our two conditions was better to begin with, one point is certain, that it is best for each to remain in his own. The change, and the only change, to be desired, is that gradual and progressive improvement of our circumstances which is the natural fruit of successful industry; when each year is something better than the last; when we are enabled to add to our little household one article after another of new comfort or conveniency, as our profits increase, or our burthen becomes less; and what is best of all, when we can afford, as our strength declines, to relax our labours, or divide our cares. This may be looked forward to, and is practicable, by great numbers in a state of public order and quiet; it is absolutely impossible in any other.

If, in comparing the different conditions of social life, we bring religion into the account, the argument is still easier. Religion smooths all inequalities, because it unfolds a prospect which makes all earthly distinctions nothing. And I do allow that there are many cases of sickness, affliction, and distress, which Christianity alone can comfort. But in estimating the mere diversities of station and civil condition, I have not thought it necessary to introduce religion into the inquiry at all; because I contend that the man who murmurs and repines, when he has nothing to murmur and repine about, but the mere want of independent property, is not only irreligious, but unreasonable, in his complaint; and that he would find, did he know the truth, and consider his case fairly, that a life of labour, such, I mean, as is led by the labouring part of mankind in this country, has advantages in it which compensate all its inconveniences. When compared with the life of the rich, it is better in these important respects: It supplies employment; it promotes activity. It keeps the body in better health, the mind more engaged, and, of course, more quiet. It is more sensible of ease, more susceptible of pleasure. It is



attended with greater alacrity of spirits, a more constant cheerfulness and serenity of temper. It affords easier and more certain methods of sending children into the world in situations suited to their habits and expectations. It is free from many heavy anxieties which rich men feel; it is fraught with many sources of delight which they want.

If to these reasons for contentment, the reflecting husbandman or artificer adds another very material one, that changes of condition, which are attended with a breaking up and sacrifice of our ancient course and habit of living, never can be productive of happiness, he will perceive, I trust, that to covet the stations or fortunes of the rich, or so, however, to covet them, as to wish to seize them by force, or through the medium of public uproar and confusion, is not only wickedness, but folly, as mistaken in the end as in the means; *that it is not only to venture out to sea in a storm, but to venture for nothing.*

END OF VOL. II.









